ENTERTAINING GERMAN CULTURE

Contemporary Transnational Television and Film

Edited by

Stephan Ehrig, Benjamin Schaper & Elizabeth Ward

Entertaining German Culture

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Introduction

Entertaining German Culture?

Stephan Ehrig, Benjamin Schaper, and Elizabeth Ward

Entertaining German Culture? For most of the twentieth century, combining the concepts of popular entertainment with German cultural and intellectual history—especially *Made in Germany*—would have seemed like the perfect oxymoron. Just as German literature took longer to embrace international forms of popular culture, the prioritization of popular over high culture was also a later development in German visual culture, which likewise met with considerable bourgeois resistance.[1] Ever since Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer voiced their famous verdict against the capitalization of the arts and their neglect of critical engagement with societal issues in favor of entertainment, German history and popular entertainment have been seen as two opposing poles within the cultural spectrum of the Federal Republic.[2] Furthermore, the strong sense of the serious and inward-looking nature of Germany's efforts to "come to terms" with its own past did not convince an international mass audience to *entertain*, as it were, the idea of engaging with German cultural and intellectual history on screen as a fun leisure activity.[3] International popular entertainment was commonly imported from the United States and Western Europe, however these productions frequently perpetuated images of Germany as the Nazi war enemy or of Cold War animosities, if indeed they featured German content at all.[4]

After reunification, Paul Cooke argues, a shift took place toward a "cinematic normalization":[5] German film and television proactively adopted Anglo-American Hollywood-style aesthetics and apolitical topics, providing the spectator with moments of escapism that ultimately served to affirm the social order of post-reunification German society.[6]

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This, in turn, reshaped which themes were explored on screen and also how they were presented.[7] Parallel to these developments, the early 2000s saw a strong trend toward what Lutz Koepnick has termed a new German heritage cinema, which, due to its entertaining Hollywood-style format and "museal gaze" on familiar German twentieth-century history, produced a series of international hits.[8] Cooke argued that it was precisely this focus on Germany's problematic past that marked the "unique selling point" of German cinema as an internationally recognizable brand. Furthermore, he argued, the majority of films made around 2000, through their choice of twentieth-century historical themes, reaffirmed "the abnormality of the nation and its continuing need to address aspects of its past."[9] In this volume, we propose that this image has significantly changed since the turn of the twenty-first century. Since the mid-2010s, in particular, thematizations of German (cultural) history in film, television, and streaming series have radically shifted from the museal gaze of heritage cinema toward the adoption of transnational genre narratives—and, in so doing, have partially maintained the polarizing character of previous intellectual and artistic engagements with Germany's past. While this prioritization of transnationally recognizable entertainment strategies over national memory culture has led to an increasingly differentiated appreciation of German cultural and intellectual history in the (inter-)national mainstream, allowing for internationally less-known eras and facets of Germany's cultural heritage to circulate across the globe, it has also attracted criticism for pushing a critical engagement with Germany's problematic past into the background.[10]

The reorganization of German and European film funding and the promotion of Babelsberg as a transnational hub for film and television production in the early 2000s[11] put the famous historical studios and German "heritage" content firmly back on the international mainstream map, and resulted in much more differentiated genre explorations of World War Two in US–European co-productions.[12] This international production infrastructure with a transnational orientation, we argue, creates culturally hybrid images and fosters a global dissemination and reception of German entertainment content. In this context, German history—and, increasingly, cultural and intellectual history—serves as a creative inventory to inform especially European and North American narratives that transcend the straightforward documentation of twentieth-century terror, and instead to highlight new, entertaining, and playful approaches to German historical narratives. Simultaneously, with both Germany's increasing political importance and postwar self-

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confidence, and an increase in public film funding, this revaluation of German culture both nationally and internationally has allowed for the emergence of a renewed mainstream cinema and television interest in central themes of German cultural history beyond the country's bellicose and divided twentieth century.[13]

This shift has been driven in no small part by the emergence of an increasingly transnational production landscape and global Video on Demand (VoD) streaming services. The success of internationally acclaimed productions such as *Dark* (2017–20), *Babylon Berlin* (2017–), and *Unorthodox* (2020) has signaled a renewed—and, in particular, international—interest in German history and culture. In the context of Netflix's international and multilingual expansion strategy, these series and films are part of a phenomenon known as "Netflixization," an approach that aims to rectify a national logic in television culture production and counter-Hollywood programming.[14] The media change facilitated by globally operating transnational streaming services provides a denationalizing force that shifts and partially homogenizes a transnational production scene, but one in which issues of national, local, and cultural representation and of authenticity remain prevalent.

In the introduction to their special issue on "German Netflix Culture" (2022), André Flicker and Xan Holt address this very tension. For example, Netflix's promotion of local content is not solely a part of the provider's own, economically driven business strategy; the emphasis on the local is in fact also a response to European Union legislation that requires that 30 percent of a streaming service provider's content be made in Europe. It is precisely the (mis)alignment between the transnational interests of the company and the specificities of local production contexts that can come to represent the "collision between global and local interests in the form and content of individual series," which conversely may actually lead to local productions being "denuded of some of [their] local specificity."[15] When we turn to the impact of these streaming services on German film and television, it becomes clear that German cultural and intellectual history on screen is not only changing and being modified, but its underpinning narratives are also being radically reimagined in line with the streaming services' economic interests, production structures, and genre narratives. Accordingly, we argue that this global shift has created, and continues to create, a new form of transnational German visual culture that has moved beyond "normalization" and outward-looking heritage cinema, while at the same time building on the success of both. We will showcase how transnationally conceived VoD streaming films and series employ a "translatable" and

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"inverted cultural history" embedded in a "grammar of transnationalism",[16] but without losing focus on the "economic undercurrents built into the reception"[17] of streaming series. In return, this may result in a schematic adaptation of historical German source material that does not allow for a deeper appreciation of its cultural specificities.

Here, Randall Halle's three-part analytical model serves as a helpful point of departure to understand the dynamics shaping the continuous transnationalization of German television and film.[18] In his analysis, Halle found that three different foci had been employed by scholars interrogating the concepts of the transnational turn in film studies. The first approach frames transnationalism as a cultural shift (from formerly international, cosmopolitan, metropolitan, postcolonial cinema) by underlining the complex relationship of transnationalism with the processes of globalization, which has undone the autonomy of national economies and undermined the sovereignty of the nation states. The second approach is to focus on motifs and images by placing German and European narrative strategies in contrast to Hollywood, which risks being reductive. The third approach attends to aspects of production, cast and crew, financing, and locations. However, rather than seeing them as separate research strands, Halle suggests we approach an analysis of transnational cinema in a way that attends to *economics*, to the *image* as a larger apparatus of the production, and to processes of *reception*—in other words, to examine how transnational cinema opens up new imaginative communities.

Building on Halle's three-part analytical model of transnational culture, we will interrogate what happens to the *image* of the German nation, German culture, and German heritage within this transnational film production and streaming landscape. We will, first, address the cultural shifts in German heritage cinema, production contexts, and narrative strategies toward popular entertainment television and film genres, and second, explore how these changes have created a new transnational hybrid visual culture that disseminates German cultural history globally, which in turn reimagines the narratives and imaginaries of German cultural and intellectual history that have dominated postwar cinema and television.

"Normalization" and Heritage Cinema

In order to understand the conditions that have facilitated the increased visibility of German film and television since the 2010s, it is important

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that we employ a multi-stranded approach that identifies the different factors both on and off screen that have converged to give rise to this new chapter in German screen media. At this point, it is important to stress that these different factors were initially not so much the product of a nationally determined culture or media strategy, be that state- or industry-driven, as a unique moment in which different cultural and commercial trends converged and aligned, which only then were further developed as part of a deliberate strategy. This broader temporal prism through which to view these recent trends is key, as the breakthrough of German television, film, and streaming series is certainly new in scale, but not necessarily unprecedented in substance; that is to say, we must be careful not to overstate its novelty, because to a certain degree these changes are the product of a repositioning of German film and television outputs rather than an intrinsically new emergence or even caesura with past works. The new developments not only build on previous outputs and practices, but, as the chapters in the first section of this volume in particular will demonstrate, they also are intrinsically dependent on the erstwhile national and later international structures they created. In order to understand how and why German productions are achieving these new levels of cross-border appeal and success, it is thus necessary to separate the cultural factors from those of the industry itself, which are coalescing to facilitate this new phase in German television, film, and streaming series.

One of the risks when discussing recent developments in German film and television is the tendency to imply that the market for German television, and to a lesser extent German film, has hitherto been exclusively confined to German-speaking territories. It is certainly true that, until recently, German television was largely an import market, and audiences for German productions were overwhelmingly in German-speaking Europe. However, ever since the founding of Bioskop Film in 1973, co-productions have long formed a central pillar of German television and film, especially when it came to depicting German history. Longstanding co-production agreements have also been formalized through a series of bilateral and trilateral film production agreements between the German Ministry for Culture and Media and over twenty countries. These behind-the-scenes agreements not only rendered German television and film far more transnational than is often acknowledged on a production level, but they also meant that, structurally, German film and television were ideally placed to profit from the transnational production wave that unfolded at the start of the 2000s. German production companies, for instance, were actively

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involved in the emergence of the "Scandi Noir" wave.[19] ZDF has subsequently formalized its co-production partnerships through the creation of Alliance with France Télévisions (France) and Rai (Italy) in 2018, and through the establishment of a development and co-production partnership with the BBC, agreed in 2019.

The structural frameworks that have facilitated the transnational emergence of German film, television, and streaming services have provided the key production and distribution platforms for German films and series. These nonetheless need to be understood alongside important developments in both the types of stories told and how they are told. The roots of these transnational developments are closely aligned with the reconfiguration of the national in twentieth-century Germany. The reunification of Germany in 1990 brought together two different German audiences from two differently imagined nations. While West German television consistently enjoyed far greater (illicit) cross-border appeal in the GDR than East German television could ever have hoped to enjoy, television producers and filmmakers were nonetheless faced with the challenge in the early 1990s of how to appeal to these two broadly defined audience groups under a new understanding of "we." In responding to this challenge, filmmakers notably turned to present-day comedy, a genre that is predominantly rooted in the national due to its dependence on a shared point of reference in order for the humor to resonate with audiences in what Eric Rentschler has termed the "cinema of consensus."[20] The popular resonance of this recourse to genre film and the overwhelming avoidance of explicitly political themes is borne out in box office data: in four of the first five years after reunification, the highest grossing German film each year was a comedy.[21] The targeting of new domestic audiences through comedy was certainly a successful strategy, but it also brought about a series of structural and economic challenges in the German film industry. In ways not dissimilar to the challenges that beset the West German film industry in the 1950s through the production of domestically popular but internationally unattractive *Heimat* films, the domestic comedies of the early 1990s found few markets abroad. The limited international appeal of German films created a twofold problem for the industry. Firstly, the limited international appeal of the films reduced the profitability of the productions, which in turn impacted the amount of money available for future productions. This then served to exacerbate the limited international appeal of the films further. Secondly, the limited critical and international popular appeal of the films impacted the international prestige of the German film industry. In no small part, the desire to redress the

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artistic and economic problems that beset the German film industry in the 1990s underpinned the emergence of the production company X Filme. As X Filme co-founder and producer Stefan Arndt reflected: "We didn't ride the German comedy wave or make remakes of German films. We look for authentic material that is set in Germany or has to do with Germany, but works internationally. The goal is a sophisticated independent auteur cinema that is more in the tradition of the American independents."[22]

Around the same time, the newly founded Babelsberg-based production company teamWorx Television & Film and the Munich-based Constantin Film began to produce films that fused melodrama with historical subject matter. Whereas pre-1990 productions were overwhelmingly embedded within domestic frames of remembrance, and were structured around a clear appeal to the contemporary spectator to learn from the lessons of the past, the approaches of teamWorx and Constantin Film explicitly avoided political narratives and instead relied on historicized approaches that sought to "show history as it really was."[23] Through films such as *Der Untergang* (Downfall, 2004), *Sophie Scholl—Die letzten Tage* (Sophie Scholl—The Final Days, 2005), *Das Leben der Anderen* (The Lives of Others, 2006), and *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* (The Baader Meinhof Complex, 2008), German film achieved unprecedented levels of popular and critical success abroad through what was subsequently labeled the German heritage film.[24] Central to this drive for authenticity was simultaneously the deployment of historical exhibits as props and the avoidance of expository social and political narrative detail. In this way, the past was to be told in the present tense, seemingly in order for audiences to experience the period without the guiding moral hand of the filmmaker. However, precisely because of the absence of a moralizing voice from a modern-day perspective, these films and series overwhelmingly presented the past as a chapter that had *been* overcome, rather than one to be overcome. Of equal significance was the international success enjoyed among critics and audiences by these reworkings of the German past. Indeed, one of the striking legacies of German heritage film is the marked discrepancy between the positive reception enjoyed internationally and the often negative reception of the films domestically. Strikingly, both the international praise and the national criticism coalesced around the same question: whether it was acceptable for German filmmakers to approach the past through the lens of melodrama and, above all, for them to privilege the visual over the political. Given the frequent criticisms leveled against melodramatic and depoliticized treatments of the

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German past on film domestically, it is interesting to note that the early 2000s also saw the emergence of so-called "Event Television"—namely, extended television films focusing on World War Two and the GDR that were broadcast as ninety-minute episodes over consecutive nights. In contrast to German heritage films, "Event Television" broadcasts such as *Dresden* (2006), *Die Flucht* (March of Millions, 2007), and *Unsere Mütter, Unsere Väter* (Generation War, 2013) enjoyed widespread popular appeal and, in the case of the latter, marked a tentative breakthrough in terms of the exportability of German television productions.[25]

The successes enjoyed by the industry during this period do not, on first viewing, appear to be directly applicable to the emergence of German series as highly successful productions on streaming platforms: films and series exploring the Third Reich, the Holocaust, West German terrorism, and the GDR no longer seem to form the face of German film and television for international markets. While it is certainly true that series focus less on these historical periods, it is nonetheless clear that the industry has learned lessons from the German heritage film wave. Firstly, the series are firmly and explicitly embedded within genre conventions, often employing an explicitly melodramatic approach (see Carol Anne Costabile-Heming's chapter in this volume). Secondly, they foreground the authenticity of setting, be that historical or modern day.[26] Where the streaming models of VoD and SVoD do, however, diverge from television and cinema programming is in their reduction of the temporal and the expansion of the spatial planes in terms of viewing experiences. The streaming transnationalization of film and television is, in this regard, a multifaceted process that affects all stages of production and reception. It uproots a domestic product from linear and geographically targeted modes of consumption, and allows audiences around the world to enjoy the series at their own pace and in their own space. This volume, thus, interrogates how Germanness is conveyed through nationally rooted but transnationally mobile contemporary films, television series, and streaming series by exploring the transnational modes of production, design, and consumption that facilitate their cross-border appeal.

Shifting Transnational Production Contexts and Film Markets

A key factor when interrogating this transnationally conceived German-language visual culture is the ever-increasing amount of European

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film funding available in combination with more and more cross-European and transatlantic international cooperation. This, we argue, has led to the emergence of a primarily European mode of production that forges correspondences between global, European, national, and local audiovisual markets. In a 2021 interview with *Variety*, Simone Baumann, the managing director of German Films, an organization that promotes German films outside the country, fittingly states that it is "hard to define what a German film is nowadays . . . Even among the German-language films, what is being produced is far from predictable. Films set during the Nazi era are becoming less common, while other periods are being explored."[27] This point is echoed by Thorsten Ritter, executive VP of acquisitions, sales and marketing at Beta Cinema, who identifies the success of the Oscar-nominated 2016 film, *Toni Erdmann*, as a milestone in "push[ing] the envelope of what was regarded as German cinema," arguing that the production company's own film *Ich bin dein Mensch* (I'm Your Man, 2021) sought to follow in the footsteps of the 2016 film with an approach that is closer to Hollywood screwball comedies than the "hard-hitting angst-ridden German films that many expect from the country's filmmakers," before adding, "It is very entertaining, smart, and quite commercial."[28] This very combination of German themes with Anglo-American production conditions and narrative structures creates a hybrid—and above all entertaining—screen culture that complicates what can be defined as a purely German film or television series.

A second major factor in defining this new era of German screen production is the rise of so-called "quality" and "complex" television, and longitudinal modes of television storytelling to which the German television and film market has been adapting.[29] As Florian Krauß argues, "quality series" should not be primarily understood as "good," clearly definable texts, but rather as a discourse within the heterogeneous and changing television (and film) industry in Germany, an aspiration and a tendency in its recent series productions.[30] A game changer in this regard and a prime example of these transnational ambitions is *Babylon Berlin* (2017–), co-written and co-directed by Tom Tykwer, Henk Handloegten, and Achim von Borries. *Babylon Berlin*, the first German series to be funded as a partnership between a public broadcast network (ARD/Das Erste) and a private subscription channel (Sky), was supported by funds from regional, federal, and transnational organizations, and was subsequently sold to Netflix for distribution in North America and Australia.[31] The series draws on the continued international allure of Berlin and German twentieth-century history, this time locating the

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action in a gritty noir pastiche of the late Golden Twenties.[32] It further combines familiar and globally readable tropes from World War One, depicted through flashback sequences that transport the viewer to the Western Front. These scenes are interlinked with scenes of Weimar Berlin in 1929, and depictions of the myriad complexities of Germany's first democracy, from its economic turmoil shown through mass poverty and unemployment to the juxtaposition of sexual liberty and poverty-induced sex work in the capital city. The series, on the surface at least, delves into political issues including Berlin's mafia gangs and drug-fueled criminality, the street fighting between Communists and the police, and the rise of National Socialism. As Sara F. Hall argues, in so doing, the series "engages in a unique and timely practice of cultural reproduction shaped by a specific combination of historical subject matter and the present media-historical moment,"[33] thereby combining a pop cultural exploration of the Weimar Republic for a domestic audience with long-established quality TV formulae and transnational genre-readability to create an unprecedented international commercial success for a German-language show.[34]

With the changed production and funding contexts, Babelsberg as a new international production hub, Berlin's international appeal, and a German producer and funding scene seeking to imitate internationally popular genres (melodrama, political drama, crime noir, period drama), we therefore argue that a new transnationally minded German visual culture has emerged. As Kraus attests, a new "simultaneity of global and local impulses" characterizes the "practitioners' defi0 nitions, attributions, and references of 'quality series'" and also deals with the potential traveling of German content due to rather recent distribution options for "subtitled drama" in non-German, Anglo-American markets. However, as well as harboring clear aspirations for transnational markets, these media texts and their production are still very much shaped by national consumption and distribution models. Indeed, as a number of the productions in this volume attest, in many cases German global streaming hits begin as domestic television broadcasts.[35]

By contrast, Netflix and other transnational streaming services need to be conceptualized as a transnational system that integrates into national media systems and invests in an ideology of the nation where this is a requirement for entering the local media system. The ideology of the nation needs, therefore, to be conceptualized as a flexible system that is not necessarily threatened by deterritorialized transnational broadcasters, but is in a position to negotiate it, by deterritorial-

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izing cultural artifacts while aiming at both international and national audiences.[36]

Genre as Transnational Narrative Strategy

To allow for the transnational circulation of German cultural and intellectual history, genre film and television production in the age of streaming emerge as a crucial strategy for rendering specifically German themes and productions accessible and appealing to an international audience.[37] In this context, genre should be understood as "cultural categories that surpass the boundaries of media texts and operate within industry, audience, and cultural practices as well."[38] Whereas research on film genre has traditionally focused on Hollywood, genre develops a new significance in the context of transnational film and television markets.[39] Analyses of genre and transnational film and television underline their reliance on concrete cinematic or television contexts. Consequently studies can reveal insights into specific production, distribution, and reception processes, as well as specific sociocultural backgrounds. By interrogating the role of genre in the transnational circulation of German cultural and intellectual history, it is not our aim to make claims about specific genres such as crime, romantic comedies, or fantasy, but rather to analyze "how they fit into larger systems of cultural power,"[40] and their "special ability to establish connections"[41] between different cultural and language communities. While definitions and practical implementations of individual genres are constantly in flux, generic structures still serve as a point of orientation for the audience.[42] Nonetheless, the question needs to be asked as to whether the general assessment that genres "provide spectators with means of recognition and understanding . . . [and] help render films, and the elements within them, intelligible and therefore explicable" still applies in a transnational context.[43] If we understand genre as such a dynamic processual concept, easy accessibility and a comprehensive understanding of genre rules for audiences are neither realistic nor vital. Rick Altman argues that different groups derive generic pleasure from different genres, and that genres develop different meanings when read by different groups so that genre is "not one thing serving one purpose, but multiple things serving multiple purposes for multiple groups."[44] Thus, even "within an overall atmosphere of imprecision, difference and contradiction, . . . varying levels of agreement among viewers are possible" as genres can "assure simultaneous satisfaction on the part

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of multiple users with apparently contradictory purposes."[45] For the transnational circulation of German cultural and intellectual history in the age of streaming, this means that productions no longer have to prioritize a particular national audience, but rather can address various niche audiences around the globe. Hence genre rules—even for audiences from diverse cultural and linguistic communities—provide guiding principles that can mitigate difficulties at reception that stem from linguistic complexities and cultural specificities. Furthermore, genre not only facilitates communication between producers and recipients, but also among a "constellated community":[46] (online) networks and communities gain generic pleasure experienced when watching a film or television show, while also establishing, stabilizing, and reconfiguring genres "according to the interests of a current real-world community."[47]

Netflix serves as a paradigmatic example for the role of genre in facilitating communication between producers and constellated communities in the age of streaming. Genre structures Netflix's user interface and is thus crucial for the streaming service in building recommendations and communicating with its audience.[48] Mareike Jenner demonstrates how Netflix has more recently sought to broaden its audience appeal transnationally by embracing more popular genres which were traditionally considered highly formulaic such as comedy—in particular sitcoms—and reality TV, which is potentially at odds with Netflix's strategy of employing genres associated with "quality" or serious subject matter.[49] However, similar to Altman's arguments that genre films maintain a strong connection to the culture that produced them and are vital in resolving contradictions within specific cultural systems,[50] Jenner states that "transnationalism and domestication of texts are not opposing forces, but both part of Netflix' strategy for appeal across cultures."[51] The question of quality appears to be particularly acute in genre discourse in German cinema, with genre cinema traditionally seen as less prestigious and of lower quality than *Autorenfilm* (auteur cinema).[52] Recent scholarship, however, has challenged the claim that genre films were conventional, trivial, or of lower quality, while only the *Autorenfilm* could be artistically valuable as it expressed the artistic singularity of its creators.[53] Bringing together transnational film and television production, the circulation of German cultural and intellectual history, genre, and entertainment, we argue that transnational productions concerned with Germany's past apply familiar genre structures—as well as postmodern mixes of, and playful takes on, genre—in an entertaining and accessible way in order to address a broad international audience with explicitly German content. Consequently, current productions

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differ significantly from previous mainstream productions, which, according to director Christian Petzold, had demonstrated a sense of "shame" about being set in Germany and had tried to be as American as possible instead of being "inspired by their German setting" (*aus den Orten eine Geschichte gewinnen*).[54] Not only are plots identifiably German but genre productions have also gained both more prominence and renown, which, as this volume will demonstrate, has only intensified with the arrival of streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video.

Transnational German Visual Culture

In this volume, we argue that German film and television series are undergoing a profound shift toward internationally produced and transnationally conceived productions. This new form of transnational and transcultural German visual culture is underpinned by an increasingly internationalized film market. This fosters a mutually assimilating cultural exchange, whereby German producers export a nationally defined, but transnationally imagined, cultural and intellectual history and, in return, import popular international media formats in order to reach a broad national and international audience. We argue that this transcultural diversification and hybridization of German themes, motifs, and ideas transcends the postwar focus on Germany's Nazi and GDR pasts, and has established a new narrative culture that goes beyond "normalization." This includes taking into account the "perceived balancing act between the national and the transnational" that Sebastian Heiduschke points to "when these transnational German films still re-imagine the German nation and German national identity." The strategy chosen by companies such as Netflix to venture into foreign markets and co-produce local stories of a "transnational nature" with global appeal adds a new layer to this argument: producing content to which international viewers can relate and that is both understandable and enjoyable across borders, but that still tells a tale inserted in a specific cultural realm.[55] The combination of emplotting a grammar of transnationalism and postmodern genre mixes has allowed recent German-made and transnationally conceived productions such as Netflix's *Dark*, ARD/Sky's *Babylon Berlin*, and RTL's/Amazon Prime Video's *Deutschland 83*, *Deutschland 86*, and *Deutschland 89* to present complex reflections on German cultural and intellectual history to international mainstream audiences.

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Beyond these transnational production strategies, we argue that the cultural productions resulting from this transnational turn are not merely hybridized jigsaws built from previous national set pieces, but rather a complex and continuous decentralized dialogue. In his work on the exchanges between UK and German theater practices, Benedict Schofield argues for a specific cultural porosity between the two cultural scenes; this does not, however, result in "direct acts of cultural transfer, but rather in processes of cultural transformation, strongly echoing Latour's stance that points of connection or mediation within a network are often places of dislocation, distortion, and translation." Schofield describes the transnational network as

> enabled not just by an abstract flow of aesthetic practices, nor simply by exposure to Germany through touring productions, but through the physical movement of UK practitioners to Germany to gain exposure to different practices, akin to a form of international apprenticeship. This circulation of practitioners is, however, heavily skewed to produce a vision of "Germany" that is ultimately filtered through a specific city (Berlin), specific theaters (the Volksbühne and Schaubühne), and even a specific practitioner (Ostermeier).[56]

Through the European funding scene and streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video operating as transnational broadcasters in a local production context, a very similar effect can be applied to the film and television productions discussed in this volume. Building on Schofield's observations, this mutually assimilating cultural exchange, and the import/export of media formats, narrative strategies, and contents employed by any of the films/series should, as we argue in this volume, be seen as an interconnected process of inward and outward reabsorption. Thus, while German productions are still drawing on internationally established genres as well as narrative and aesthetic tropes from non-German films/series, and these tropes are consecutively modified at a local level within the series (= inward absorption), they are then modified and employed (received and/or even referenced) in series and films outside of Germany (= outward reabsorption). This becomes particularly acute if we follow Stiglegger's argument that cinema is globalized as never before and that cultural interaction and exchange have led to a hybridization of genre. Within this process, some genre conventions are still followed, but precisely because audiences around the world are more versed in genre than ever, such productions are undergoing a dynamic and fluid process of

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transformation, which allows for more generic experiments than has previously been the case.[57]

A paradigmatic example for the productive exchange between Anglo-American and German production practices and themes in the age of streaming is Netflix's German-language Originals. *Dark*, Netflix's first and most successful German-language production to date, interweaves a plethora of complex storylines, characters, and themes with internationally recognizable pop cultural references (which are examined in depth in Lorena Silos Ribas's chapter in this volume). Set up as a sci-fi mystery series in a genre-typical *Weltendorf* (universal village) that is largely unaffected by national history and skips Germany's Cold War division and only indirectly references the two world wars, *Dark* becomes a complex narrative net around time travel and the teleology of human existence (inward absorption).[58] Time-topical pop cultural references (music by Nena, Cher, Dead or Alive, Apparat; *Back to the Future*, *Captain Future*) and other period features make the series translatable to international audiences (as well as anatopic items such as US pill boxes that deterritorialize the setting), while the plot, dialogue, and paratextual opening quotes are interwoven with strong themes and intertexts of German philosophy (Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Freud and psychoanalysis) and cultural history (Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften* [Elective Affinities] and *Faust*, Romanticist tropes, and themes from Marxist postwar culture such as Bertolt Brecht and Heiner Müller). Further intertextual references include Greek mythology, Ibsen's *Gengangere* (Ghosts), physics, Christian iconography, and a historical focus around the postwar era and the environmental movement in the context of the Chernobyl disaster. In this way, *Dark* positions specific German themes along universally coded cultural references (outward reabsorption). All these layers make for a complex science fiction show that has attracted a global fan base who collectively discuss all family trees and cultural references in online discussion fora. *Dark* has received high reviews on *Rotten Tomatoes*,[59] and was ranked the 58th greatest television series of the twenty-first century by BBC Culture.[60] Season three became the second most watched Netflix show in August 2020,[61] and strikingly, 90 percent of its viewership was from outside of Germany.[62] No other German-language television series or film has ever received such global exposure, or such critical and popular success.

Transnationalizing strategies are also employed in Netflix's *How to Sell Drugs Online (Fast)*. The series draws on an even more readily translatable international model by employing the widely established US

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computer nerd genre (*Star Trek—The Next Generation*'s Jonathan Frakes features in a short cameo appearance as himself) in combination with Silicon Valley tech stardom and a high school coming-of-age comedy drama (inward absorption) designed around a factual account based on the true events of a teenage online drug dealer in Leipzig, for which *Breaking Bad* (2008–13) had already delivered a popular blueprint.[63] The series has several of Netflix's core inclusion values (disabled, queer, and ethnically and socially diverse characters and themes that are otherwise still fairly uncommon in German film and television content) with German dialogue, while all visualized text (animations, animated texts, and emails) are in British English, thereby visually marking its transnational conception.[64] The real-life story is relocated to another universal village in western Germany, and the plot revolves around five high school friends who accidentally set up a successful online drug sales business and face a series of exploits and encounters related to drug trafficking, all set against the backdrop of a typical coming-of-age story interfused with teenage romance.[65] While not relevant for understanding the plot itself, all three seasons playfully reference (largely canonical) works of German literature for the sake of ironic entertainment, with German cultural identity markers performing a similar function to the English-language pop cultural referencing of Shakespeare and Jane Austen.[66] Here, the protagonists' German school lessons serve as a reference point for the plot development in each season: season one implements Frank Wedekind's 1891 play *Frühlings Erwachen* (Spring Awakening) as a metaphor for drug abuse and puberty troubles, aspects also explored via a Grimm's fairy-tale-themed restaurant called *Märchenwald* (Fairy-Tale World). Similarly, season two evokes Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (Sorrows of Young Werther), while season three compares the characters' difficulties preparing for their *Abitur* school-leaving exams to Goethe's *Faust* (outward reabsorption). In an ironic sense of self-aware political history, in another lesson the teacher explains "the history of our country is so much more than just World War Two. There's also World War One, the Schmalkaldic War, . . . ," again forming a specific narrative hybrid that transculturates internationally successful media formats interspersed with specific German cultural history references, set in an "everytown," conceived for a transnational viewership.

In a bolder move regarding historical narratives, Netflix also produced its own retelling of the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in 9 AD with *Barbaren* (Barbarians, 2020–) as an apoliticized German founding myth void of its controversial nationalist reception history.[67] German

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nationalists, including the Nazis, have used the battle as an ideological rallying point—a supposed foundational moment for German civilization and proof of their "superior pedigree" and fighting skills. To this day, the battle and the tribes' leader in the fight, Arminius/Hermann, remain sources of inspiration for far-right extremists, who regularly make pilgrimages to related sites. In a *New York Times* interview, Arne Nolting, a writer and showrunner on the series, said that he and the other showrunners were conscious of this political baggage, and explained that part of his inspiration for making a show about the Battle of Teutoburg Forest was a desire to reclaim a pivotal moment in European history from the far right (outward reabsorption), arguing "We didn't want to be scared away and leave the subject to those forces we detest." Jan Martin Scharf, another writer and showrunner on *Barbaren*, said that the production team had consciously taken a gritty approach to the subject matter to avoid glorifying the violence between the Cherusci and the Romans. They also wanted to emphasize Arminius's identity as a migrant, with Scharf adding: "It was important for us not to show him as some big war hero or the founder of a German empire."[68] Thus, the creators cast Laurence Rupp, an Austrian actor, in the role in part because, with his darker complexion and hair, he did not fit the blond, blue-eyed depictions of Arminius that have been common in the past. In line with Netflix's diversity strategy, season two further introduces a queer attraction between Arminius's brother Flavus and the Germanic leader Marbod, as well as the Black female character Dido from Karthage. Aesthetically, *Barbaren* makes clear reference to BBC History's successful *Vikings* (2013–20) and Mel Gibson's 2004 *The Passion of the Christ* (inward absorption).[69] As *The Economist* noted,

> sexy, impulsive, proto-German tribesmen take on an oppressive superstate led by cold, rational Latin-speakers from Rome. Produced in Germany, it has all the hallmarks of a glossy American drama (gratuitous violence and prestige nudity) while remaining unmistakably German . . . It is a popular mix: on a Sunday in October, it was the most-watched show on Netflix not just in Germany, but also in France, Italy, and fourteen other European countries.[70]

Even though the eponymous battle has already taken place, an open-ended second season was released in 2022, meaning that the transnational retelling of one of Germany's problematic founding myths is set to continue well beyond its actual focal point.

Netflix Originals thus functions as an umbrella for a diverse range of productions whose individual topics, genres, and aesthetics merge

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with Netflix's own generic brand.[71] Through this brand, they seek to produce transnationally oriented, transculturally translatable hybrid genres that disseminate an increasingly profound and differentiated appreciation of German cultural and intellectual history in the (inter) national mainstream, which prioritize transnationally recognizable entertainment strategies over national memory culture.

Ausblick: Reception and Traveling Memory

This volume is not only interested in describing how a mutually assimilating cultural exchange in German film and television is playing out on a content level; it also aims to include and address the productions' international reception. As we argue that these transnationally produced and conceived entertainment formats offer a different and diverse image of German cultural and historical narratives, we also need to take the dimension of popular reception into account, and not only establish *that* these texts travel, but further analyze *how* they travel, and specifically *why* certain texts travel particularly successfully. In line with Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz's seminal 1990 study *The Export of Meaning*, we will integrate the receptive dimension of decoding as the "interaction between the culture of the viewer and the culture of the producer."[72] Liebes and Katz argued that it is not enough simply to analyze the "message" of the text; we must also analyze what messages reach the viewer, because meanings are produced through "a process of negotiation between various types of senders and receivers."[73] Within the context of their 1990 study, Liebes and Katz proposed that American television was successful in traveling across borders due to the universality of its themes and formulae, its polyvalency, and the market dominance and broad availability of American programs. This then allowed its programs' "meanings" to be transformed in unexpected ways during the reception process, depending on the cultural, social, and ethnic belonging of the viewer.[74]

Today, however, audiences operate in a markedly different context. Viewers are more interconnected, and content is more personalized than ever. Interpersonal decoding of content has increasingly moved from living rooms to social media, from national television stations to international streaming services, and from global production hubs to booming niche markets. The chapters in this volume will thus, as far as can be ascertained at present, analyze how the Video on Demand viewing experience has changed the approach to cross-cultural and trans-

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national audience research and content communities reading transnational German film and television.[75] Specifically, we want to ask—as a kind of *Ausblick*—what long-term impact this shift in representation and dissemination will have for the image of German culture in the future. Here we propose that these new forms of transnationally produced and conceived entertainment have the potential to impact the transcultural and traveling memory of German cultural and intellectual history, and could even see German films, television, and streaming series emerge as a form of soft power via a globalized entertainment scene, which, often uncritically, frames Germany on screen as a multicultural, open, and connected European nation, thereby amending and partially replacing the hitherto strong thematic focus on World War Two and the Cold War.[76]

Astrid Erll has argued in her deconstruction of presumed nationalized memory cultures that, while the nation state may have proved a useful matrix for addressing nineteenth- and twentieth-century constellations of memory, in the current age of global media cultures and diasporic public spheres, the nation appears less as the key arbiter of cultural memory. Instead, she proposes using "transcultural" as an "umbrella term for what in other academic contexts might be described with concepts of the transnational, diasporic, hybrid, syncretistic, postcolonial, translocal, creolized, global, or cosmopolitan."[77] Global media cultures play an important role for a transcultural, traveling mnemonic culture "in which historical novels are quickly translated, movies dealing with the past are screened simultaneously in different corners of the globe, and worldwide TV-audiences can have mass-mediated experience in real time."[78] Moreover, in the production of transcultural "mnemoscapes," media and carriers of memory appear to be key factors. Thus if, as Erll suggests, the global circulation of mnemonic media such as film may indeed affect a change of perspective in viewers from other parts of the world and lead to empathy and trans-ethnic solidarity, it remains to be seen if this newly mediated and disseminated transnational German cultural and intellectual history will change the way German culture, history, and even language will be perceived globally in the future—and indeed whether this new *trans*national German "content" may return cultural memory to a pre-nation status, or at least reverse some of the highly nationalized imaginary around it.[79]

As Rebecca Braun and Benedict Schofield argue, the transnational asks us what value still lies in the traditional model of German Studies, and at the same time it asks us to start to unpick some of that canonicity and allow new voices to arise: "a form of deterritorialization of

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German-language culture that shows how we can approach the problematic, ultimately reductive, concept of the nation without denying its existence and continued power."[80] For scholars in transnational German studies, global streaming services operate at the nexus of multiple essential fields such as communications, media, and area studies, as well as television, all of which will have an impact on the production of culture for national audiences and how they relate to the transnational media they consume in an attempt to understand better why some areas are elevated to universal cultural significance while others are not,[81] and whether these play out along cultural, geographic, ethnic, gender, or class lines.[82] As James Hodkinson and Benedict Schofield suggest, when thinking about the size, shape, and future of our discipline, it seems we need to find ways to define the continuing roles for both national cultures and transnational perspectives within them—how German culture [migrates] geographically and culturally and how it has transformed, adapted, and responded to the world in differing locations and in both contemporary and historical contexts.[83] In this volume, we offer a first comprehensive exploration of the impact that transnational German visual culture will have on the global perception of German cultural and intellectual history.

Volume Structure

The volume is organized around three parts. The first part, Transculturating Screen(ed) Heritage, explores precursory film and television industry developments, and frames these current changes within a broader context of twenty-first-century cinematic hybridizations of German cultural history.

In his historical overview, "The New German Television and the Newer German Film: A History of Industry Disruption and Synergy," Randall Halle explores the dynamic relation of big screen to small screen from the early days of German postwar film and television to the age of streaming in the early twenty-first century. He argues that the 1980s initiated an inversion in which private television broadcasting came to align with a model of the viewer as a consumer, which fostered a new popular cinema that stood in contrast to the critical mode of the 1960s and 1970s. In the 2000s, streaming services and the new golden age of quality programming have fundamentally transformed the market, ruptured terrestrial broadcast models, and created a multi-screen viewer experience. Similarly, streaming services' global storytelling

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strategies have brought forward new stories catering for diverse niche markets within an all-encompassing market. Connecting these shifts in format to shifts in funding, Halle establishes a crucial link between production conditions and images/content in recent German broadcasting, which will be explored in the following chapters.

Halle's industry contextualization is followed by two chapters focusing on German and international films created within the traditional studio system. They explore their capacity for the transnational dissemination of German culture through studios' funding, production, distribution, and reception opportunities, which paved the way for the transnational streaming culture of the last decade. A. Dana Weber's chapter "Reenacting Propaganda: Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* and the Anti-Nazi War Film" investigates Tarantino's 2009 film and its various references to Fritz Lang's *Man Hunt* (1941) in the context of the film's funding, cast, crew, and shooting at the studios of the Babelsberg AG in Potsdam near Berlin. Her comparative reading of both films explores Babelsberg as a competitive hub for transnational filmmaking, which rather than tackling the hegemony of Hollywood seeks to attract US producers for transnational collaborations. Focusing on the reenacting of elements of historical filmmaking in Babelsberg, Weber shows how *Inglourious Basterds* performs a symbolic occupation of German cinema that sheds light on Tarantino's distinctive approach to history, and demonstrates the appreciation of German cinema in the global mainstream.

While Halle and Weber interrogate the production aspects of transnational cinema and television, Bridget Levine-West shifts the focus to the reception and dissemination of German cultural and intellectual history post-production and post-release. In "The Shakespeare Boom Comes to Germany: Eighteenth-Century German Literature and Transnational Media Literacy," Levine-West scrutinizes the accompanying *Filmhefte*, booklets that are a crucial part of government-driven media literacy incentives in Germany, which were intended to replicate the UK's Into Film project and provide contextual information and learning materials on selected films for secondary school teachers. As a paradigmatic example she examines Leander Haußmann's *Kabale und Liebe* (2005) and Philipp Stölzl's *Goethe!* (2010), and situates these films' adaptations of canonical works by, or portraying episodes from the life of, Weimar classicist protagonists Friedrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang Goethe, respectively, as a response to Hollywood's Shakespeare-boom of the late 1990s. Levine-West argues that the German productions differ from their US predecessors in so far as they not only emulate

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entertainment qualities and seek commercial success, but also advance specific pedagogical agendas—both transnational and national—by means of their plots, characters, and aesthetics. Analyzing these films through the lens of what she terms the "education apparatus," she aims to dismantle outdated hierarchical orderings of "source text" over "adapted text," and "education" over "entertainment," and demonstrates how the films support younger audiences, in particular in developing multifaceted understanding of the complex history, reception, contemporary instrumentalization, and overall cultural value of national literary and filmic works in transnational times.

The volume's second part, Transnational Streaming Ambitions, moves from studio film to television productions created within a national context, but which were either already co-produced or later acquired by a transnational streaming service in order to reach a broad international audience. In the context of the digital age's new distribution capacities, which enable simultaneous global broadcasting, the chapters investigate which traditional production formats, aesthetic approaches, and aspects of German cultural and intellectual history have proven themselves appealing to the transnational agenda of streaming giants such as Amazon Prime Video and Netflix.

Elizabeth Ward's chapter, "Deterritorializing the Stasi in *Deutschland 83/86/89*," examines the intriguing case of *Deutschland 83/86/89*, which was saved from cancellation after its first season's poor viewing figures in Germany due to its huge success in the UK and the US, and thanks to its acquisition by Amazon Prime Video, which then went on to produce the final two seasons of the show itself. To address this discrepancy between the reception of the show in Germany and that in the United Kingdom and United States, she compares the *Deutschland* series' reception to that of German heritage films, which were equally well received internationally but criticized for their superficial treatment of Germany's troubled past. Ward first compares the *Deutschland* series to the "museal gaze" of heritage film, and concludes that, in contrast to such films, the series embraces its temporal specificities, while offering the potential for broader identification through the spatial displacement of its protagonists. Consequently, the show enables a process of mutual orientation between the East German agent and the contemporary viewer as they both learn together what it means to be a spy on foreign territory. In the second part of her chapter, Ward then turns toward the transnational circulation of the show by considering the relationship between the series' employment of transnational genre

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tropes and the process of deterritorialization as a means of depicting both the Stasi and the series' characters.

With "History in the Mainstream: *Charité*," Carol Anne Costabile-Heming discusses the German television series *Charité* and its fusion of medical history and hospital drama. The show had already attracted more than a million viewers nationally before Netflix acquired the rights to it in 2018 for multiple territories, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Costabile-Heming examines how the series' directors Sönke Wortmann, Anno Saul, and Christine Hartmann exploit the genre of the hospital drama to create engaging and enriching portrayals of the Charité hospital during three distinctly important and critical historical moments in its history (1888–91, 1943–45, and 1961). The reliance on typical characteristics of the hospital drama facilitates the series' transcendence of historical fiction: its Berlin setting and specifically German cultural context appeal to international audiences. By examining the US reception of the series, the chapter shows how streaming services such as Netflix contribute to more nuanced reception of German intellectual and cultural history.

Moving to the more recent, post-1990 Berlin context, Felipe Garrido Espinoza dissects the German capital's criminal underground in "Mapping Berlin: Space, Trauma, and Transnationalism in *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* and *Sense8*." Both series revolve around the criminal distribution of power and space in the decades after German reunification. Their cinematic depiction of gang wars provides a fundamental structure that captures their shared understanding of aesthetic transnationalism—namely, global cinematic practices that allow for a merging and hybridization of transnational identities, while remaining structurally grounded in the (cinematic) Cold War divisions of the city space. In contrast to the covert transnational production regimes that underscore so much of European televisual and cinema production, *Sense8* is immanently transnational in its production context as well as in its imagery, use of space, and fundamental conception as a story about sensory transhuman connectivity. As such, Garrido Espinoza argues that *Sense8*'s Berlin plot offers a paradigm for the series' negotiation of transnational interconnectivity and traumatic temporalities underlying each of the eight sensates' backstories. The show's multiperspectivity thus adapts German history as a structure for its intradiegetic interconnectedness. The effect is decidedly ambivalent as the centrality of *Sense8*'s Berlin sequences, along with the other Western settings of the show, recenters a US American–European epistemology.

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The final part of the volume, The Transnationalization of German Cultural History, focuses on original German productions by streaming services. The chapters explore how Netflix Originals and Amazon Prime Video produce German-language formats, merging transnational narratives and aesthetics with themes from cultural and intellectual history in order to appeal to a local German audience while simultaneously and successfully distributing them internationally.

Benjamin Nickl's chapter "Producing Denationalizing Television: The Netflixization of the New Berlin City Genre in *Dogs of Berlin*" embarks on a transnational investigation of the current phenomenon of the metropolitan city's rise in Netflix Global productions through the example of *Dogs of Berlin* (Netflix Global German, 2018–). He uses the concept of "Netflixization" to describe Netflix's strategy to appeal to its growing non-US customer base as well as the processes in transnational German television production in the 2010s as a denationalizing force through which the capital city becomes shorthand for a nation's culture and its socio-ethnic fabric, packaging big city drama and neo-noir crime into a transnationally framed showcase for metropole fiction. Nickl examines the mechanisms that have earned German stream screen content its unabated popularity in the global Video on Demand market, and considers the sociocultural consequences of a digital mediation process that transports images of German culture and history into millions of homes and onto millions of screens. The gritty crime story of *Dogs of Berlin* turns on the same principle of locating itself in German culture through place-specific imagery and, more importantly, also draws on sociohistorical place-specific storytelling around the "Berlin experience" as a complex "German experience."

Tom Smith's chapter further challenges this reliance on the "Berlin experience" by exploring the international appeal of Berlin's techno scene and queer subcultures in "Now Mainstreaming: Queer Phenomenology, Techno, and the Transnational in *Beat* and *Futur Drei*." Through the example of Amazon Prime Video's series *Beat* (2018) and the film *Futur Drei* (2020), Smith analyzes how Germany's music scene is presented as bound up in exploitation and violence that transcend national and cultural borders. Both works resist any suggestion that electronic music and clubs might provide apolitical spaces of escape. Queer experiences of electronic music are positioned in both works, in Sara Ahmed's terms, as blockages within the flow of mainstream norms, albeit in opposite ways. While in *Beat* queerness is an irritant within the narrative dynamics and the club scene, *Futur Drei* imagines a small-town club scene where transcultural queer intimacies are entirely ordi-

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nary, so that the film itself offers a utopian resistance to the restrictive opposition between mainstream and underground, queer and straight, German and non-German.

Lorena Silos Ribas's chapter, "Looking into the Abyss: The Transnational Puzzle in *Dark*," concludes the volume with an investigation into Netflix's *Dark*, the most successful German-language television series ever made. Similar to Nickl's chapter, Silos Ribas presents *Dark* as an example of the strategy chosen by companies such as Netflix to venture into foreign markets and to co-produce local stories of a "transnational nature" with global appeal. The chapter analyzes how *Dark* incorporates a "grammar of transnationalism" (international pop-culture references, science fiction/time travel genre, contemporary gender equality and environmentalism debates, Biblical and mythological references), which make the show readily accessible for international audiences, while it also establishes a dialogue with Germany's cultural and intellectual history, thereby offering additional appeal to local viewers. Beyond the various German pop-cultural references at a surface level, the chapter demonstrates how *Dark* also reflects upon prominent philosophical and literary developments in German intellectual history, which together with the series' complexity, character development, and enhanced visual quality, further both its value as an audiovisual product and its transnational appeal.

Stephan Ehrig is a Lecturer (Assistant Professor) in German at the University of Glasgow. He previously taught at the universities of Bristol, Durham, and University College Dublin. Alongside his monograph, *The Dialectical Kleist* (Transcript, 2018), which analyzes the Marxist appropriation of the nineteenth-century author Heinrich von Kleist in East German literature and theater, and co-edited volumes *The GDR Today: New Interdisciplinary Approaches to East German History, Memory and Culture* (Peter Lang, 2018) and *Exploring the Transnational Neighbourhood: Integration, Community, and Cohabitation* (Leuven UP, 2022), he has published on nineteenth-century landscape writing, female city walking in East German film, and cultural imaginings of modernist new towns in East German literature and film.

Benjamin Schaper is a Stipendiary Lecturer in German at the University of Oxford. He was formerly a teaching fellow at the universities of Munich and Durham, as well as a Sylvia Naish Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Modern Languages Research in London. He has published

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widely on twentieth- and twenty-first-century German literature, film, and television, including his monograph *Poetik und Politik der Lesbarkeit in der deutschen Literatur* (Winter, 2017). His postdoctoral research analyzes loneliness and human–machine interaction in the ages of romanticism, modernity, and the digital age. Along with his interests in transnational visual culture and loneliness, his research further focuses on the literary market and literary networks.

Elizabeth Ward is a film historian specializing in German cinema. She is a Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin at the Europa-Universität Viadrina, and during the preparation of this volume was a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Languages, Cultures and Societies at the University of London. Her research specialisms include East German cinema, Cold War German cinema, and contemporary historical film. Her monograph, *East German Film and the Holocaust* was published in 2021 by Berghahn Books. Her recent and forthcoming publications explore film and television stardom in the GDR, East German Holocaust documentaries, and constructions of childhood in *Trümmerfilme*. Alongside her research, she is also closely involved in developing inclusive practice at universities.

Notes

1. Peltzer, "Genregeschichte in Hollywoodkino," 316.
2. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*.
3. Prominent exceptions include Wolfgang Petersen's internationally successful *Das Boot* [The Boat] (1981) and *Die unendliche Geschichte* [The Neverending Story] (1984), Volker Schlöndorff's *Die Blechtrommel* [The Tin Drum] (1979), and Uli Edel's *Christiane F. Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* [Christiane F.] (1981).
4. The critical inquiry into German cultural and intellectual history and popular entertainment overwhelmingly took place in academic and intellectual circles or in avant-garde movements, producing films of the New German Cinema that "interrogated images of the past in the hope of refining memories and catalyzing changes." Rentschler, "From New German Cinema," 263–64. See also Wolfgram, *Getting History Right*, and Reichel, *Erfundene Erinnerung*.
5. Cooke, "Abnormal Consensus?," 224.
6. In this respect, the debates about genre film and television in the 2000s connect with broader debates about accessibility, entertainment, audience affinity, and commercial success. In the aftermath of the *Literaturstreit* in the early 1990s, publisher and critic Uwe Wittstock and author Matthias Politycki promoted a program of New German Readability. This sought to connect with the demands of a non-professional readership by promoting a middle-brow literary program based on Anglo-American postmodernism, entertainment, and the import of narrative forms from abroad, particularly from the Anglophone world, which was heavily contested by the custodians

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of high culture. For more on the debate on readability in the 1990s and beyond, see Schaper, *Poetik und Politik der Lesbarkeit*.

7. Mikos, "Germany as TV Show Import Market"; Fisher and Prager, *Collapse of the Conventional*.
8. For instance *Der Untergang* [Downfall] (2004), *Das Leben der Anderen* [The Lives of Others] (2006), and *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* [The Baader Meinhof Complex] (2008), as well as television films such as *Der Tunnel* [The Tunnel] (2001), *Die Luftbrücke—Nur der Himmel war frei* [Berlin Airlift] (2005), *Dresden* (2006), *Die Sturmflut* [Storm Tide] (2006), *Die Mauer—Berlin '61* [The Wall] (2006), *Krupp—Eine deutsche Familie* [Krupp—A Family between War and Peace] (2009), and *Das Adlon. Eine Familiensaga* [Hotel Adlon—A Family Saga] (2013). Koepnick, "Reframing the Past."
9. Cooke, "Abnormal Consensus?," 225. See also Powell and Shandley, *German Television*; Mikos, "Germany as TV Show Import Market."
10. In regard to the presentation of Berlin in Netflix's *Unorthodox* (2020), Rob McFarland argues that settings such as the Wannsee were emptied of their own "horrific past" so that "problematic sites will mostly slip by unnoticed and problems of history . . . evaporate." While Etsy's trauma was shown to viewers constantly, the series nevertheless formed a "protective numbness" for the viewers: "By rendering individual, historical, and societal traumas into a drip-feed of constant entertainment, Netflix creates the conditions where . . . Germans (and Americans) can enjoy their time sitting on a couch and binging on Etsy's trauma without realizing how much her pain has to do with their own history, and the fundamental violence and racism that is still an integral part of their own institutions and common practices." See McFarland, "Etsy's *Erlebnis* and Moishes's *Mikveh*," 247 and 251–53.
11. Studio Babelsberg was re-established in a move that concluded the short-lived experiment of a German-based European-style transnational cinema. A renewed vision for Studio Babelsberg transformed it into a transnational cooperation hub that prioritized global integration above national competition, and, in so doing, facilitated a revival of the "Babelsberg myth" to create an appealing environment for Hollywood producers. The company is now a service provider and co-producer for other production companies and for television. Studio Babelsberg recently finished a large, multi-million-euro upgrade to create the outdoor metropolitan backlot "Neue Berliner Straße" [New Berlin Street], which resembles numerous European cities (London, Paris, Berlin), making it ostensibly geared toward international productions. Peters, "Neue Berliner Straße." See also Heiduschke, "Co-Producing World Cinema," 147–48.
12. For instance, Steven Soderbergh's *The Good German* (2006), Bryan Singer's *Valkyrie* (2008), Stephen Daldry's *The Reader* (2008), and Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* (2009).
13. Examples include the East German espionage past intertwined with Grimm's fairy tales in Joe Wright's *Hanna* (2011), Stefan Zweig's Austro-Hungarian legacy in Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), a highly alienated Wagner Ring Cycle in Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012), and the versatile engagement with German culture in Lars von Trier's *Dogville* (2003), *Melancholia* (2011), *Nymphomaniac* (2014), and *The House that Jack Built* (2018).
14. Citton, *The Ecology of Attention*.
15. Flicker and Holt, "German Netflix Culture," 214.
16. Jenner, *Netflix*, 227.
17. Ibid., 213.
18. Halle, "German Film: Transnational," 517–18.

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19. German companies co-produced the Swedish series *Beck* (1997–) and *Wallander* (2005–13), and the Danish series *Ørnen: En krimi-odyssé* [The Eagle: A Crime Odyssey] (2004–6), *Forbrydelsen* [The Killing] (2007–12), and *Broen* [The Bridge] (2011–18). Toft Hansen and Waade, *Locating Nordic Noir*, 151.
20. Rentschler, "From New German Cinema."
21. *Werner—Beinhart!* (1990), *Pappa ante portas* (1991), *Otto—Der Liebesfilm* [Otto—The Love Film] (1992), *Der bewegte Mann* [The Most Desired Man] (1994), and *Stadtgespräch* [Talk of the Town] (1995). A notable exception was 1993, when the World War Two drama *Stalingrad* was the highest grossing German film of the year.
22. Cited in Siewert, *Entgrenzungsfilme*, 221.
23. Hake, "Entombing the Nazi Past," 100.
24. Koepnick, "Reframing the Past."
25. Other examples include *Die Gustloff* (2008), *Krupp—eine deutsche Familie* (2009), *Eldorado KaDeWe—Jetzt ist unsere Zeit* [Eldorado KaDeWe] (2021), and *Der Palast* [The Palace] (2022).
26. Netflix's Anglo-German co-production *Munich—The Edge of War* (2021) here serves as an example of how the resistance against Hitler is presented as a joint Anglo-German concern by seeking to link British characters' concerns about the country's failure to understand the threat posed by Hitler with the inner-German struggles between the resistance and NSDAP supporters.
27. As well as German-language film, Baumann's 2021 portfolio included German co-productions such as Pablo Larraín's *Spencer* (2021), Wes Anderson's *The French Dispatch* (2021, with Studio Babelsberg as a co-producer), and Leos Carax's *Annette* (2021). Barraclough, "Why *Spencer* is a German Film."
28. Barraclough, "German Cinema Reaches Out."
29. See, for example, Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age*, and Mittell, *Complex TV*.
30. Krauß, "Quality Series," 48. See also Nesselhauf and Schleich, *Das andere Fernsehen?!*; Mikos, "Germany as TV Show Import Market."
31. When it launched on Germany's public broadcast channel ARD, viewing figures reached 8.5 million, giving it a 24.5 percent market share. *Babylon Berlin* succeeded internationally as well, with distribution rights sold to sixty countries. Roxborough, "How the *Babylon Berlin* team broke the rules"; Clarke, "HBO Europe Picks Up German Drama *Babylon Berlin*."
32. For more detailed analyses, see Hester Baer and Jill Suzanne Smith's edited volume *Babylon Berlin*, Andreas Blödorn and Stephan Brössel's edited volume *Babylon Berlin und die filmische (Re-)Modellierung der 1920er-Jahre*, and Sara F. Hall's seminal article "*Babylon Berlin*: Pastiching Weimar Cinema."
33. Hall, "*Babylon Berlin*: Pastiching Weimar Cinema," 304.
34. Potter, "The (Trans)national Appeal within *Babylon Berlin?*" See also Daub, "What *Babylon Berlin* sees in the Weimar Republic."
35. When we look closer at how such series are presented to domestic audiences, we find an interesting development: while *Der Palast* [The Palace] (2021) was broadcast as a conventional "Event Television" miniseries on public service channels, the same production was repackaged on the broadcaster's online mediatheque as shorter multipart episodes. Such a move marks a clear break with previous, and often unsuccessful, attempts to appeal to both linear and nonlinear audiences with the same production. Krauß, "Quality Series," 49, 56. See also Elizabeth Ward's chapter in this volume.
36. Jenner, *Netflix*, 216. See also: Chalaby, "Towards an Understanding," 8.
37. Although film and television genres are not direct equivalents, our use of genre will always refer to both media, as common to both are the ways in which genre

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depends on production, distribution, and reception contexts and functions as a point of orientation for audiences. For more on the relationship between genre in film and television see Mittell, "A Cultural Approach"; Mittell, *Genre and Television*; Kuhn, Scheidgen, and Weber, "Genretheorien und Genrekonzepte."

38. Mittell, "A Cultural Approach," 3. See also Altman, *Film/Genre*; Blothner, "Filmgenres und Zielgruppen"; Frow, *Genre*; Kreimeier, "Am Anfang war das Chaos"; Kuhn, Scheidgen, and Weber, "Genretheorien und Genrekonzepte"; Mittell, *Genre and Television*; Neale, "Questions of Genre"; Peltzer, "Genregeschichte im Hollywoodkino"; and Stiglegger, "Genrediskurs."
39. Cf. Kuhn, Scheidgen and Weber, "Genretheorien und Genrekonzepte," 8. The history of genre research is summarized in Kuhn, Scheidgen, and Weber, "Genretheorien und Genrekonzepte," 6–16; Altman, *Film/Genre*; and Stiglegger, "Genrediskurs."
40. Mittell, "A Cultural Approach," 16.
41. Altman, *Film/Genre*, 14.
42. For instance, Blothner, "Filmgenres und Zielgruppen," 203–4; Frow, *Genre*, 56, 91, and 110; Kuhn, Scheidgen, and Weber, "Genretheorien und Genrekonzepte," 17 and 23; Mittell, "Serial Orientations"; and Urschel, "Making Progress," 2.
43. Neale, "Questions of Genre," 46.
44. Altman, *Film/Genre*, 151, 158, and 195. He further argues that while many scholars would "strive to eradicate contradictions, such differences necessarily constitute a basic component of genre reception" also amongst fans (ibid., 175).
45. Ibid., 176 and 195.
46. Ibid., 172.
47. See ibid., 168–69. Blothner also argues that films create their audience and the audience then again creates its films—a dynamic that creates brands such as the James Bond franchise, which then allows them to (re)adapt to the times. Blothner, "Filmgenres und Zielgruppen," 208–9.
48. For a detailed analysis see Jenner, *Netflix*, 119–20, 132–35, and 145–46.
49. See ibid., 139–57 and 227. For more on the notion of "Quality TV," see Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age*.
50. Altman, *Film/Genre*, 26.
51. Ibid., 221.
52. For example, Stiglegger, "Genrediskurs," 5 and 12. Kuhn, Scheidgen, and Weber further elaborate that the supposed lower quality of genre film has also led German cinema scholarship to neglect genre for a long time: "Standing in the tradition of Weimar film theory and criticism, genre film was labeled an 'average production' (Kracauer, 1928) or a 'ready-made film' (Arnheim, 1932) and placed in opposition to the auteur-based 'filmic artwork' or the auteur film, long considered intellectually and culturally superior" (in "Genretheorien und Genrekonzepte," 9).
53. See Ritzer, "Genre- und Autorentheorie," and Urschel, "Making Progress." Within the German cinematic context, this tension is exemplified by a debate between genre-filmmaker Dominik Graf and the Berlin School filmmakers Christoph Hochhäusler and Christian Petzold, in which Graf criticizes the idea that German films—be they for cinema or television—that focus on plot development and refer to traditional generic structures are increasingly denied artistic status and dismissed as seemingly trivial and mainstream. Cf. Graf, Hochhäusler, and Petzold, *Ein Gespräch*. For more on the *Berliner Schule*, see Abel, *Counter-Cinema of the Berlin School*.
54. See Graf, Hochhäusler, and Petzold, *Ein Gespräch*, 21.
55. Heiduschke, "Co-Producing World Cinema," 148–49.
56. Schofield, "Theater Without Borders?" 234.

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57. See Stiglegger, "Genrediskurs," 7–8.
58. The use of a universal town is a strategy also employed in Netflix's *Stranger Things* (2016–), *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–20), *Riverdale* (2017–), as well as in David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* (1990–91 and 2017).
59. *Rotten Tomatoes*, "Dark."
60. BBC Culture, "The 100 greatest TV series."
61. Katz, "Netflix Shows."
62. Roettgers, "Netflix's Drama *Dark*."
63. In this context, the nerd functions as a transnationally recognizable archetype that can then be adapted into specific cultural contexts. For the international translatability of nerdom, see Cervelli and Schaper, "The Lonely Nerd." It is interesting to note that it was the hacker film *Who Am I—Kein System ist sicher* (2014), which itself creatively engages with Anglo-American predecessors such as David Fincher's Mark Zuckerberg biopic *The Social Network* (2010), that initially brought the filmmakers Baran bo Odar and Jantje Friese to Netflix's attention. For their next project, bo Odar and Friese developed Netflix's first German Original, *Dark*. For *Who Am I*, its Anglo-American influences, and its discussions of nerdom, see Schaper, "Conquering the Meatspace."
64. Netflix, "Inclusion & Diversity."
65. The town is called Rinseln and, although principal photography took place in and around Bonn, the name nonetheless recalls the Lower Saxon town of Rinteln, which has a reputation for being the most generic German town—so much so that it was chosen to represent the average voting demographic for the 2017 federal election by the private broadcaster RTL. The protagonists attend the fictional Anton Köllisch High School, named after the first chemist who synthesized MDMA, which is the drug they mostly sell. See Mühlens, "Dreharbeiten für neue Netflix-Serie in Bonn"; Gokl, "Spielt neue Netflix-Serie in Rinteln?"
66. Examples include *The Lion King* (1994), *Clueless* (1995), *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999), and *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001), as well as many popular period genre adaptations.
67. For instance, Griffiths, "Hermanns Schlachten"; Ehrig, "From 'Völkisch' Culture"; Fischer, *Das Eigene und das Eigentliche*.
68. Rogers, "Reclaiming."
69. As in Gibson's film, all the Romans in the series speak Latin, while the Germanic tribes speak (albeit contemporary) German, similar to the use of Aramaic in *The Passion of the Christ*. *Vikings* acted as the model for most of the production design, while the visual appearance and characterization of *Barbaren*'s Thusnelda (Jeanne Goursaud) appears almost like a carbon copy of *Vikings*' Lagertha (Katheryn Winnick).
70. *The Economist*, "How Netflix is creating a common European culture."
71. Here we can also point to German Netflix series like *The Billion Dollar Code* (2021), which depicts the origins of Google Earth by framing German IT nerds and hackers in the ranks of Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, and is set against the background of the 1990s Berlin techno scene; the multilingual trans-European dystopian future fantasy *Tribes of Europa* (2021–), which draws on the narrative tradition of films such as *The Hunger Games* (2012–15) and *Maze Runner* (2012); the Vienna-based crime mystery series *Freud* (Marven Kren, 2020–), which strongly references Albert and Allen Hughes's *From Hell* (2001); and the drama series *The Empress* (2022–) on the early years of Elisabeth of Austria (Sisi) which employs musical and fashion anachronisms similar to Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* (2006) and Netflix's own *Bridgerton* (2020–).
72. Liebes and Katz, *The Export of Meaning*, x.
73. Ibid., 4.

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74. See ibid., 5.
75. See Mikos et al., *Revisiting "The Export of Meaning."*
76. McFarland also recognizes this with regard to the depiction of Berlin in *Unorthodox*, but warns of neglecting the horrors of the city's past. See McFarland, "Etsy's *Erlebnis* and Moishes's *Mikveh*," 252.
77. Erll, "Travelling Memory," 9.
78. Ibid., 11.
79. Ibid., 12 and 15.
80. Braun and Schofield, *Transnational German Studies*, 6.
81. Perkins and Verevis, "Transnational Television Remakes."
82. Braun and Schofield, *Transnational German Studies*, 6.
83. Hodkinson and Schofield, "Introduction: German in its Worlds," 3.

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PART I

Transculturating Screen(ed) Heritage

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Chapter 1

The New German Television and the Newer German Film

A History of Industry Disruption and Synergy

Randall Halle

In 1961, Joe Hembus published his in/famous report, *Der deutsche Film kann gar nicht besser sein* (German film cannot be better).[1] That report's acerbic assessment of the conditions of film production at the time responded to the real film market collapse in the 1960s. Yet we know that this collapse gave incentive to transform the German film industry. Out of crisis the much-celebrated New German Cinema arose. Since Hembus's report, critics, and historians of German cinema, have continued to chart out an industry caught in repeated cycles of crisis and success, collapse and expansion.

Part of the reason for the cycles of crises film historians identify is the repeated disruptions brought about by new technologies. In the 1960s, audiences stayed home in front of the new television rather than going to the cinema. Subsequent disruptions from newer technology like home video, Video on Demand (VoD), all the way to contemporary streaming platforms initiated new waves of market crises. Of course, the most recent crisis brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic was not technology based. Nevertheless, the resulting collapse in theatrical distribution propelled new technology, and compelled new market structures.

Yet if one looks beyond feature-length film and cinema exhibition, it might be possible to develop a narrative of more consistent transformation in which disruption is a norm and change has a continual impact on established players in the audiovisual sector. Indeed, a focus

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on cinema that considers primarily the image on the big screen will fail to comprehend the full complexity of that image. It is not cinema contra television but rather cinema *and* television. Indeed, Karl Prümm remarked that film history cannot be written as a particularized story of a single medium.[2] Cinema is a complex medial dynamic that requires attention to both the image moving on the screen and the apparatus that brings it there. Looking at the current conditions of production, we can tell a large and complex story with technological changes transforming viewer possibilities and spectator expectations, with the big screen and the small screens evermore closely connected.

In this chapter, to attend to this complexity, I want first to focus on the immediate market conditions upended by the pandemic, an era that has fostered a new form of quality production for viewing at home and on other mobile devices. I will then turn to a historical analysis, considering the synergistic relation between the New German Cinema and what we can call New German Television. I will address the disruption of that synergy resulting from the advent of private television in Germany, which resulted in what is often described as the cinema of consensus, and I will ask if we can speak of a TV of consensus as well. While these media developments are often discussed as a German national phenomenon, I will underscore the broader European contexts of these transformations. And finally, I will return to the new age of quality production, and consider the relation to streaming and new forms of screens (especially the proliferation of smartphones, which has added to the mix). Cinema exhibition as well as broadcasters seek new roles in this new environment in which feature films, longform narrative series, short series, and minimal length moving images circulate alongside each other, and content is available on a rapidly expanding set of platforms including cinemas, Public Service Broadcasters (PSB) media libraries, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, YouTube, Disney+, Star, HBO, and Tiktok.

The Present Is Crisis, the Future Is Content

The cycle of crisis and expansion is not simply a phenomenon of German cinema. A recent instantiation came in 2020 at the Göteborg Film Festival when media analyst Johanna Koljonen expressed her delight at the always lively annual Nostradamus Report. For the first time in the seven-year history of the report, she was able to offer a positive vision for the European film industry. The previous seven years had been

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filled with dire assessments based on the disruption that streaming services had caused. The reason she gave for a positive assessment in 2020 was new forms of storytelling:

> The next three to five years will be a time of creativity and chaos, with many artistic highs and unprecedented amounts of money invested in scripted content. This is when the changes we have predicted over the years are becoming everyday—new release patterns normalized, the digital transformation of TV completed, content crossing cultural and linguistic borders freely, and categories like film, serial drama, and online video both increasingly overlapping and separately leaning into their own unique strengths. A competitive and rapidly shifting marketplace will be dominated by the largest media companies the world has ever seen. But the technology is also pushing power back toward the talent, and offering new ways for smaller, nimbler participants in the audiovisual space to connect with audiences.[3]

She presented this information with considerable energy, even glee, and it brought a great deal of hope to the representatives of the European audiovisual sector. Of course, even as she delivered this positive prognosis, the news was reporting on a rapidly spreading virus and addressing fears of a global pandemic. When she repeated the presentation at the Berlin Film Festival two weeks later, it was the last major gathering of the film industry before Europe went into lockdown and the cinema screens went blank. The German Filmförderungsanstalt (Federal Film Board, FFA) quickly studied the crisis of traditional cinema exhibition, and pointed to collateral collapse in distribution and taxes used to subsidize the production side of the media industry.[4] Over the coming years, the pandemic would pose many challenges to the industry, and to many it was a reminder that Nostradamus is the seer of catastrophe.

Yet in the middle of intensifying lockdowns across Germany, most of Europe, and the globe in general, the FFA also undertook a quick study of the streaming market, and found dramatic growth in this sector of the media industry.[5] As indicators of those positive changes, we can note that the third season of *Babylon Berlin* (2017–), Germany and Europe's largest and most successful series to date, aired on ARD, Germany's primary public service broadcaster. The premiere took place alongside releases on Netflix in the United States and in thirty-five further countries. As Jill Smith and Hester Baer noted, the series offered quality TV made in Germany to a broad audience.[6] Almost simultaneously, ARD underwent a different transformation when it premiered the series *All You Need*. This queer dramedy went straight to the online

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Mediathek (media library) without a broadcast premiere—a first in the history of the broadcaster.

It is clear in these assessments that industry considerations are not solely focused on film projects destined for theatrical release. The FFA report actually repeated many of the points of the Nostradamus Report, identifying a "war for talent" and a scramble for content as part of the new market structures. It praised global success in German storytelling, acknowledged the devastating effects that lockdown had had on traditional cinematic exhibition, but positively assessed the expansion of the home market, pointing to shifts in streaming delivery strategies. The pandemic did not put developments on hold; rather it largely accelerated the processes Koljonen had identified. A narrow cineastic focus obscures the full complexity of the audiovisual sector. I would highlight here certain connected elements in this medial dynamic: representational strategy, technologically compelled shifts in the mode of production, and socially organized means of reception. And such industry considerations invite attention to more than narrative feature-length film.

Quality TV/Quality Film

Clearly market disruption poses a financial threat to parts of the industry; for theatrical exhibition *and* terrestrial broadcast, Video on Demand streamed to the small screen via media libraries bypasses precisely terrestrial broadcast and the cinema screen, thus undermining the solvency of cinemas and the stability of television stations.[7] On the other hand, many media analysts understand these series appearing on the small screen as also setting new standards for the big screen. Quality TV, of the type Smith and Baer discuss, has an impact on the expectations of cinema audiences. Many scholars have long argued that "quality TV" builds up an audience with more elaborate expectations and expanded interests.[8] They acquire viewing expectations not generally served by standard television offerings or the blockbuster-oriented multiplexes. And in an environment where 50 percent of the German arthouse cinema's audience is aged over fifty, there is an urgent need for exhibition to inspire new younger audiences.[9] Scripted content develops synergy in the entire audiovisual sector and reaches new and younger audiences. These developments to which we must attend are occurring throughout the audiovisual sector, not just in a narrow German industry, and they impact exhibition not only in (arthouse) cinemas but on all the screens we use to watch moving images. In *Quality*

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Hollywood, Geoff King has undertaken an extensive analysis of quality production in global Hollywood.[10] Like King, we may want to explore quality film and TV as terms that offer alternatives to discussions of arthouse cinema, which focus on cinema exhibition; this chapter, along with other works in this volume, can be understood as developing the discussion for the German and European audiovisual industry.

We can use the discussion of quality TV to inspire a consideration of quality film. Discussions of arthouse cinema in recent years seem to have been motivated by a concerned focus on theatrically released films, threatened by popular media and forms.[11] However, now that Netflix and AppleTV have produced Oscar contenders, a designation like quality film that interacts with quality TV may prove more productive than retaining a focus on one form of screen culture. If there is skepticism about the claims that quality TV alters viewer expectations, there are real statistics to show a "material" connection between quality TV and quality film. The European Audiovisual Observatory's *Yearbook 2020/2021* provided data that underscore the horizontal connection across a broader apparatus of media production, distribution, exhibition, and reception. Their analysis supports the existence of an interconnection rather than explicit competition between big and small screens.[12] The yearbook noted that 89 percent of streaming releases had had a theatrical release before or alongside their release as Video on Demand; VoD has actually benefited smaller arthouse film productions, bringing them more viewers and more revenue, and investment in film and high-end series are synergistic. Production in longform series has expanded the overall investment in audiovisual production, thus making feature film production more dynamic as well. In addition to benefiting exhibition, filmmakers, and producers, the yearbook also noted that VoD releases benefit distributors working in smaller markets and in smaller countries, thereby bringing European film into broader circulation. And it ultimately underscored the necessity of the development of VoD, showing all of European film production in third place for global circulation, and noting that US productions still dominate the European audiovisual market by 73 percent. Supporting the predictions of the Nostradamus Report, this study likewise suggests that the future might not be an either cinema or cellphone, a big screen film release or small screen series market; rather the storytelling strategies and demographic appealing to audiences on multiple screens will define moving image production in the coming decade.

For German film studies, television has played a marginal role in scholarship, but at the moment there are many reasons to take up

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an analysis of quality TV and its relation to quality film. Television, streaming services, and the success of longform storytelling are having a fundamental impact on the overall German audiovisual sector. Alongside *Babylon Berlin*, we can note *Dark* (2017–20), *4 Blocks* (2017–19), *Deutschland 83/85/89* (2015–20), *Biohackers* (2020–), *Unorthodox* (2020), *Charité* (2017–), and *How to Sell Drugs Fast (online)* (2019–21) as only some of the prominent recent series with high production values. In their content these projects offer film scholars plenty for critical theoretical analysis.[13] Furthermore, as part of a growing slate of projects that enjoy great successes on German and international television and streaming platforms, it is also important to consider them as currently driving industry and audience development. These shifts in production are not localized to a few prestige projects like *Babylon Berlin*.[14] At the 2019 Berlin Film Festival, to acknowledge the importance of series productions, a new Drama Series Days was organized. It was further upgraded in 2020 to the status of a Berlinale Series Market to organize the sales and distribution of German and international series. A new section at the Berlinale's European Film Market is such a rare occurrence that it should be understood as a sign of a tectonic shift in the industry.

Serials and Features and Exhibition: A History of Synergy

For film scholars, attending to the new series may make them question whether they are tangential to feature films. Such a question invites historical comparative research. Series, longform visual storytelling as a synergistic factor on the film market, is not a new dynamic. If we expand our historical framework, we can even recognize a long tradition, emerging out of serialized silent films. Serialized films were part of the cinema's move to predominance in the offerings of free-time entertainment. As long feature films began to emerge, shorter serials became part of the regular offerings alongside newsreel and other shorts to create a screening mix of entertainment and information that could fill an evening. Films like the six-part *Homunculus* (1916), *Die Herrin der Welt* (The Mistress of the World, 1919), *Das Geheimnis der sechs Spielkarten* (The Secret of the Six Cards, 1920–21), *Der Mann ohne Namen* (Thief of Millions, 1921), *Das indische Grabmal* (The Indian Tomb, 1921), and *Die Abenteurerin von Monte Carlo* (The Adventuress of Monte Carlo, 1921) among others track out the expanding appeal to middle-class audi-

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ences, the building boom of cinemas and the film palaces of the 1920s, and an expansion of market through new storytelling forms. These films also remind us of German film's competition in the world media market. They indicate a model of filmmaking inspired by Hollywood's serials but stamped with a particular UFA studios pomp pursued in its monumental epic film strategy during the Weimar Republic.[15] Rumder Canjel's comparative work on silent film series distribution highlights for us that the UFA's "scripted content" of the 1920s offered its own quality film from Germany to broad audiences in a highly competitive market.[16]

Fifty years later, serialized storytelling reappeared, merging the quest for quality film with quality television. The made-for-television series of the 1970s and 1980s include works that are understood as milestones of the New German Cinema like *Heimat* and all its subsequent sequels and prequels (1981–2013), *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980), and the blockbuster hit *Das Boot* (1981). These projects—and likewise mammoth film projects like Syberberg's *Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland* (Hitler: A Film from Germany, 1977) and *Parsifal* (1981), which screened on Germany's ARD in 1980 and 1984—were part of a larger set of series, made-for-TV films and spectacle films. However, this is only the most obvious of examples. Indeed, German television in both the Federal Republic and the GDR provided an important catalyst as a venue of production, exhibition, and reception.

The New German Cinema and the New German Television

The authorial New German Cinema has long been a centerpiece to German film studies, but New German Cinema is unthinkable without a New German Television. In the major works on New German Cinema, the Oberhausen Manifesto of 1962 plays a crucial part in its origin story.[17] The Oberhausen revolt followed Hembus's assessment: declining box office, a descent into low-budget genre films, an old guard of filmmakers reluctant to support new talent, competition from Hollywood *and* competition with the television's small screen required a reset of the film industry. The Oberhausen group of young film radicals pronounced the death of "papa's cinema" and announced the birth of a new film. However, the status of television in both the decline of the old and the emergence of the new cinema must be underscored. What exactly its role was has been a topic of contentious research over the de-

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cades.[18] However, in his classic study of New German Cinema, Thomas Elsaesser described the conditions as "a rich film country and a poor cinema country" precisely because of the key role that television had in fostering new productions and new film strategies.[19]

Television undeniably played the role of disruptor in the postwar audiovisual industry. In 1952, television broadcast began in both the Federal Republic and the GDR. At that time, only three hundred households in the Federal Republic had a television set, however ownership quickly became a sign of success in the *Wirtschaftswunder*. After the years of war and privation, the television became central to the new consumerism of the era; by 1957 one million televisions had been sold, rising to over 3.5 million by 1962. In the GDR, under radically different conditions of production, similar dynamics between television and film developed. Television also acquired the status of a prestige object. In spite of the initial television model, the Leningrad, selling at a price that placed it well inside the luxury class of goods, by 1958 three hundred thousand televisions had been registered in the GDR. Heather Gumbert notes, though, that many of those sets came from the West or were even Nazi-era productions.[20] In the GDR the real growth in consumer goods began after the building of the Wall in 1961; nevertheless, television had already become a centerpiece of the newly furnished living room in the Federal Republic and the GDR. Likewise, in both countries, the small screen had a disruptive impact on the big screen. In this discussion of television, it is important to recall that West German television broadcast covered most of the GDR; reciprocal plans on the part of the GDR to broadcast into the Federal Republic were not as well realized, but certainly in Berlin and border regions it was possible to receive East German television signals.[21] The impact of television on social and cultural life was deep in both Germanies, but it was in the Federal Republic where television had a significant impact on the shape of the commercial film industry.

As already noted, the standard narrative of film history, and West German film history in particular, sees the television as having a negative impact on the industry because of its impact on cinema audiences. In the East a similar drastic decline in cinema attendance began with the ascent of the television.[22] We can, however, note that from the early days of broadcast, television called for quality film. The first made for television movie in the Federal Republic was the 1957 staging of Dürrenmatt's *Der Richter und sein Henker* (The Judge and His Hangman).[23] The Dürrenmatt adaptation was followed quickly by further projects, filmed on celluloid. These included *Am grünen Strand der Spree* (On the

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Green Banks of the Spree, 1960), in which for the first time a made-for-television film took up the Holocaust. This portmanteau film's first episode portrays a soldier recalling his part in the mass execution of Polish Jews.[24] Typically the story of New German Cinema describes a lag between the pronouncements of the Oberhausen Manifesto and the first breakthrough films by young German filmmakers in 1966.[25] The reason cited is often lacking infrastructure. However, if we expand our perspective beyond cinema, we can recognize that television became a producer and exhibitor of critical and experimental film before other institutions.

Starting in 1961 regional broadcasters NDR and WDR established divisions for film production. Hickethier and Hoff report that on a Tuesday evening in 1964 audiences had the opportunity to watch on ARD a German made politically critical film about World War Two followed by *Hiroshima mon amour* (Hiroshima my Love, 1959).[26] By 1965 the various broadcasters had brought in new program managers like Günter Rorbach, Peter Lilienthal, Hubert von Bechtolsheim, and Gerhard Prager. Placed in charge of the various stations' film divisions, they all sought to innovate film production precisely through the possibilities offered by television. Rorbach in particular aspired to a socially critical film that appealed to viewers where they live and work. With this support, directors like Christian Ziewer and Klaus Wiese established the Berliner Schule des Arbeiterfilms (Berlin School of Working-Class Film). Their work led the way in television films oriented toward the working class; but such work extended well beyond Berlin.

Broadcasters regularly offered film programming addressing social problems and marginalized groups. Hickethier recalls that Rohrbach's dictum "*Fernsehfilm ist Film*" (Made-for-TV films are films!) led to a direct support for celluloid. And in the situation where the Oberhausen signatories had indicted a lack of film training and access to high quality equipment for the next generation, television offered inexperienced *auteurs* an opportunity to work with an established camera team.[27] Thus, rather than understanding it as strictly antagonistic, we can consider the relation between film and television as increasingly synergistic.

A New Legal Framework, an Uneasy Synergy

Having already become a vehicle for film exhibition, in 1967 broadcasters were ready to deepen their engagement when the West German

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parliament passed legislation to bolster the film industry, the *Filmförderungsgesetz* (German Film Law, FFG).[28] This legislation not only established new regulations for the industry, it established the FFA to oversee conditions and distribute subsidies. A central portion of the FFA's mandate was explicitly to build harmony and synergy between broadcast and film. In 1973, following an existing model of drawing revenue from cinema exhibition through a tax on ticket sales, a revision to the FFG established a film levy (*Filmabgabe*) for broadcasters, the so-called Film-Fernseh-Abkommen (Film and Television Agreement). The nature of the agreement changed in subsequent iterations, but the *Filmabgabe* continues to the present as a mainstay of film production. Hence *Babylon Berlin*, for instance, follows from a long series of co-productions between German television and Tykwer's production company X Filme. A frequent central aspect of the FFA has been that in exchange for supporting a film's financing, stations obtain screening rights to the film.[29] *Babylon Berlin* and the other contemporary series expand this dynamic into streaming services. There are tensions of course between the small and big screens, but as a result the law regulated an uneasy synergy into existence.

In the 1960s and 1970s, as now, cinema owners in particular decried the competition with the small screen. Cinema audiences did continue to decline and theater owners identified a negative attitude toward cinemas: why pay for the film in an uncomfortable cinema when it could be watched in the comfort of home on TV? On the other hand, television stations consistently need material to fill airtime, and in the 1960s and 1970s broadcasters developed high-quality programming that aligned with their mandate. For broadcasters, support for film production in line with the subsidy system of the FFG actually proved more cost-effective than in-house productions.[30] In that first decade the majority of German feature films viewed were already on television and not in cinemas.[31]

In the Film and Television Agreement, the premiere of those films funded by broadcasters nevertheless went first to theatrical release, giving cinemas an opportunity to profit from the production of a better quality German film. However, cinema programmers actually turned their back on German films. Even though they denounced the conditions, German cinemas did not serve as primary venues for German films: they actually oriented themselves toward Hollywood to maximize their profitability. In many ways German cinemas undermined the commercial film in Germany by reserving slots for theatrical releases of West German socially critical films to off-time slots, early or

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late in the day, thus only a truly dedicated German cinephile audience could easily experience a German film on the big screen. The big screen exhibition can be understood as eroding the New German Cinema.

The synergistic relation between broadcast and film established at that time continues up to the new millennium as discussed in the opening of this chapter. It has come to include video, private television, and eventually streaming. Yet the contemporary situation of streaming services inverted this dynamic. Led by Netflix, new platforms established competition for content with the established broadcasters, leading to a decline in audience for the established television, a point to which we will return.

Quality Films, Radical Production

Television, in many ways the agent of the conditions attacked by the Oberhausen Manifesto, became a motor driving the New German Cinema. Already in 1963, three days after the establishment of the Second German Television (ZDF) in the Federal Republic, the station began broadcasting *Das kleine Fernsehspiel* (The Little Television Play). In the wake of the FFA, the format of the *Fernsehspiel* changed, moving to a 10 p.m. slot and becoming a venue that directly generated breakthrough film projects like Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Händler der vier Jahreszeiten* (The Merchant of Four Seasons, 1971).[32] It is here we can really see the importance of the New German Television. A partial list of filmmakers whose work was funded by the *Fernsehspiel* already reads like a who's who of the New German Cinema: Alexander Kluge, Peter Lilienthal, Herbert Achternbusch, George Moorse, Helmut Costard, and Werner Schroeter, among others. It proved instrumental in creating a vibrant environment for women filmmakers: Helke Sander, Jutta Brückner, Uschi Reich, Monika Funke-Stern, Elfi Mikesch, Chantal Akerman, and Ulrike Ottinger, among others, produced through television some of the most cutting-edge projects of feminist filmmaking.[33]

Up to the mid-1970s at least, television stations often acted as vehicles for radical social critiques. In addition to workers' films, we can note screenings of social problem films, youth milieu films, feminist films, and so on. Famous in this context is Rosa von Praunheim's film *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation in der er lebt* (It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Society in Which He Lives, 1971).[34] Produced with Günter Rohrbach's WDR, the station sought to address the liberalization of the anti-homosexual Paragraph

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175 and a new ability to represent the community. As typical then of the FFA, the film had its cinema debut at the Berlin Film Festival in July 1971, and its television premiere in January 1972. The broadcast into living rooms lent the film an impact it would never have had with only a cinema release. Controversy erupted. The Bavarian regional station, Bayerischer Rundfunk (Bavarian Broadcasting) refused to broadcast it, and the viewers in the rest of Germany witnessed a film whose images to this day stand out in the history of the moving image. A radical persiflage of the homosexual milieu, the film sparked such an outcry that it is often identified as the incitement for the modern Gay Liberation Movement in Germany.

East–West Developments

While the focus here is on the New German Cinema, the state studios in the East, the DEFA, paralleled developments in the West; DEFA devoted up to 50 percent of studio capacity to television production.[35] DEFA feature and documentary films became a regular part of the small screen, with dedicated series like the *Schauspielerreihe* on Wednesday evenings.[36] Many classics of DEFA film found reception in the Federal Republic via these broadcasts. Provocatively we could suggest that in these first decades of broadcast what I am identifying as the New German Television actually contributed to a redefinition of the spectator in the West in a way that was more in line with the East. The postwar West German commercial film industry that had treated spectators as audiences gave way with the FFG and FFA to a state-organized subsidy system, in which spectators were understood as citizens. Critical of the GDR, nevertheless, Egon Monk, the director of the film division of the NDR, was a student of Brecht and he advocated an alternative to commercial film.

The control over content in the West was of course not the same as that in the East; the auteurist mode of production of New German Cinema was at core almost an antithesis to the collective decision-making process in the East. Nevertheless in the second half of the 1970s both states clamped down on their critical artists. In the GDR the expatriation of Wolf Biermann in 1976 was the most prominent of a series of repressions and censorships.[37] In the Federal Republic, the response to the terrorism of the decade led to the state clamping down on radical work for both big and small screens. For filmmakers the *Radikalenerlass* (radical decree) of 1972 impacted production largely by shifting fund-

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ing to support for the "safety" of literary adaptations.[38] The impact was more direct on the careers of people working in public television, where a series of purges took place, and by 1979 the signatories to the Hamburger Erklärung (Hamburg Declaration of German Filmmakers) were making attacks on television, just as the Oberhausen signatories had done on the film industry.[39]

The End of New German Television: The Emergence of Private Television

In 1982 the era of Helmut Kohl and the CDU-led federal government began. That same year Rainer Werner Fassbinder died. These two events are frequently cited as marking a caesura in film history, the end of New German Cinema. It can also be understood in many ways as the end of New German Television. In 1983, Kohl's new minister of the interior, Friedrich Zimmerman, initiated a thorough reform of the funding structures of the New German Cinema and established a principle of audience appeal and profitability, and in 1983 the new postmaster general Christian Schwarz-Schilling supported initiatives to provide private cable and pay-TV services to test areas in Germany. The introduction of private television was followed two years later by the expansion of broadcast hours to a 24-hour cycle. These changes amounted to a similar and thorough reformation of broadcast in Germany.

In the 1970s, before Kohl's election, conservative politicians had already sought to respond to the radical programming on German television by seeking a way to defund public television, or by injecting a conservative patriotic even nationalist agenda into film and television production. The *Radikalenerlass* allowed them to advance this agenda. But as of 1984 the era of critical film and television media gave way to a market-based, profit-oriented audiovisual sector. From critical-educational to a popular, "least common denominator" orientation, the mode and content of production rapidly changed, especially within private television projects. In effect, the 1980s in the West saw an inversion of the developments of the 1960s and 1970s. Broadcast now came to align with a model of "viewer as consumer," and it fostered a new popular cinema that stood in contrast to the critical mode of the previous two decades.[40]

The primary agent and beneficiary of the market transformation was a small cross-border broadcaster, Radio Télévision Luxembourg (RTL). An outgrowth of the German language broadcast of Radio Lux-

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embourg, RTL private television began broadcasting via cable in Germany in 1984.[41] RTL spread rapidly beyond the limited connectivity of the cable network through advances in satellite technology, generating programming on a new platform that would eventually be renamed as Sat.1. RTL and Sat.1 became the cornerstone of private broadcasting in Germany, expanding television broadcast hours exponentially, and creating a hunger for new and popular forms of programming.

The privatization of television, the expansion of cable, and the start of satellite brought about a dynamic expansion of broadcast airspace and airtime. A race for content began, not unlike the contemporary condition caused by the endless expansion of offerings on streaming platforms. The race for content in the late 1980s and early 1990s immediately created a trade imbalance with Hollywood; broadcasters scrambling to fill the airtime relied on cheap productions from the United States.[42] It was not that the Germans loved David Hasselhof but that shows like *Knight Rider* and *The Golden Girls* were available on the cheap, and helped fill airtime. In the newly united Germany, it was for similar reasons a moment when the history of 1950s Heimat films and popular genre productions were rediscovered. They offered inexpensive material to fill broadcast space. Television fostered a renaissance of sorts of West German *Wirtschaftswunder* film. In its popularity it even inspired a series of remakes like *Die drei Mädels von der Tankstelle* (The Three Gals from the Filling Station, 1996) that sought to transfer the appeal of the genres from the older to the new generations. A new orientation toward popular and genre production emerged both on TV and in film. As New German Television had determined New German Cinema, the new conditions likewise determined the cinema of the 1990s.

Television of Consensus?

Famously, Eric Rentschler described this moment as a "cinema of consensus."[43] It is likewise possible to discuss a corresponding television of consensus. Public broadcasters, which had been historically charged with a task to educate and inform a democratic electorate, began a struggle to keep audience attention in the face of private television's entertainment offerings. RTL's first own in-house production was the "pie in the face" show *Alles Nichts Oder?!* (Everything Nothing Or?!) in which well-known guests competed with the hosts in frivolous competitions, and the loser got pies in the face tossed by audience members. Through this kind of spectacle the RTL Group grew, and it was domi-

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nating the broadcast market by 1996. Public stations, operating on government-allocated budgets controlled by politicians unappreciative of critical investigative reporting, found themselves under-resourced in the free market, and seeking new ways to carry out their mandate.

In the designation cinema of consensus, we observe a critical rejection of the production of the period, which I would suggest frequently rests on a misrecognition of the general crisis in production. It was not just the political shift but significant market shifts as well that led to the end of the subsidy structures that made New German Cinema possible. Moreover, this is not just a West German story. Throughout Western Europe the expansion of home video in the 1980s created a new form of disruption for film *and* television. It initiated a new era of audience options and consumer control that extends to the present day, with consumers having ever-increasing options across various streaming platforms and internet venues. Furthermore the expansion of small screen viewing options undermined further the stability of West German film exhibition. The audience numbers for theatrical release dropped further in the second half of the 1980s, and continued to drop in the 1990s.

National Disruptions, Transnational Solutions

But the story is transnational in that the decline in Germany was also a decline across Europe, West *and* East. And responses as well as solutions began to develop at a European level.[44] The 1989 Television without Frontiers Directive (TWFD), which grew out of the European Community and was one of the first successful policy initiatives of the European Union, transformed the conditions of broadcasting across Europe and ruptured once and for all the relative autonomy of state broadcasters and the historic national model that had dominated broadcast since the post–World War One era.[45] The PSBs of European Union member states had to share the airwaves with private broadcasters. The collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the rapid political and economic liberalization expanded the market for private television further. RTL pursued its model in other national markets, and out of the Luxembourg–Germany cross-border origins would grow the world's largest media conglomerate, headquartered in Germany. The development of RTL and private TV in Germany is intimately connected to the development of a new form of cultural policy making at the European level, and the emergence of a European audiovisual sector.

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The 1990s thus is a period not only of post-Socialist transformation in the East, but also of European unification across the continent; and in this period the audiovisual sector underwent thoroughgoing transformations. It was not just in Kohl's Germany that the media took on new roles. Famously in the wake of the TWFD the real-estate developer and private television broadcaster Silvio Berlusconi could consolidate a media empire through the breakup of the monopoly of Italy's state television RAI. Expanding his market across Italy and into France, Germany, and Spain allowed him to secure a political future for himself, dominating European politics for decades. For its part, the small private broadcaster RTL could become one of the grand winners of this transformation, with control of sixty-eight television and thirty-one radio stations across Europe, including Russia, and other non-EU countries.

Although it became one of the world's largest media companies, what is confusing here is that the broadcast model of RTL appears national and even local. In this model each country has its own station with a certain autonomy, but as a conglomerate they follow a similar format. RTL Hungary and RTL Germany may differ significantly in terms of time of offerings, however they are subsidiaries of the same conglomerate with the same market orientation, intellectual niveau, and entertainment aspects, and they rely on the same formats. Such production appears national and yet has a Europeanized model uniting it. The decisions and content appear tailored to the local, but on comparison evidence a homologous quality such that we can say that there might not be one European audience that watches the same show, but European audiences are watching the same type of show. It is telling that for the German market RTL-plus and Sat.1, with all the possibilities of a radical break with existing models, nevertheless kept their programming in line with the fundamental forms of linear broadcast; to this day the news show *RTL aktuell* broadcasts every evening at 6:45 p.m., marking a shift in program strategies from daytime toward an evening audience—a shift no longer necessary in today's "everything on-demand at any time" streaming structures.

New Industry Models and Quality Production Redux

As in the 1960s, broadcasters continued to synergize a new post-Wall media industry into life. But perhaps the big winners were the established studios. Bavaria Studios and Studio Babelsberg rose out of these

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transitions to become centers of a diffuse but lively commercial media production industry with both television and film production at their heart. This transition to a new production strategy was not easy for the studios but they proved able to become service providers for a broader spectrum of media production for the entire audiovisual sector.

A narrow national focus that denounces a cinema of consensus can lead us to ignore the creation of a viable industry. Along with my work on the transnational aesthetic and the Europeanization of cinema, a number of colleagues have sought to balance the critique of neoliberalism in this process.[46] Hester Baer has recently added to our understanding of these processes, tracing out the developments through the 1980s in both the Federal Republic and the GDR as the audiovisual sectors came to align.[47] The rapid expansion of productive capacities and the market orientation were interconnected with the formation of big indie companies like Vivendi Universal, Fremantle, match factory, Grenada, and X Filme, which shifted the dominance of Hollywood over the European audiovisual sector.

One of the outcomes was to generate the initial formats of reality TV that have come to dominate broadcast until today. Since the first broadcast of *Big Brother* (1999 Netherlands, 2000 Germany), German and European television has been dominated by the reality TV format, with private television in particular filling expanded broadcast slots in a liberalized media market.[48] The United States and other major media markets followed suit, producing European media formats.

Critics looking for critical scripted storytelling have thus hailed the emergence of the new series as signs of a return of "quality television" programming, viewing it as a positive shift in strategy.[49] But we have to understand these developments as a part of the full complexity of the audiovisual industry in the new millennium. Those same indie companies and private television broadcasters also shifted production to serial formats, like *Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten* (Good Times, Bad Times), which premiered on RTL in 1992 and became the longest running and most successful of its genre. *Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten* has been the primary vehicle for representations of youth, milieu, sexuality, and social problems to an audience of a critical age. It has done so in ways that prompted Kohl's Friedrich Zimmermann to attack the New German Cinema a decade earlier. Tom Tykwer and his production company X Filme arose in these conditions, and without this economic and generic foundation there would be no basis for the production of the celebrated scripted content of today.

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Newer German (Streaming) Cinema

The audiovisual sector has been one of constant transformation it would seem; the tectonic shifts in the last decades have, however, been so significant as to require a revision to the legal code governing the market. The new *Medienstaatsvertrag* (State Media Treaty, MStV), passed in 2019, affords a legal basis to the expanded audiovisual infrastructure. Replacing the *Rundfunkstaatsvertrag* (State Broadcasting Treaty, RStV) that had been in effect for over three decades, the MStV regulates all media, incorporating the impact on terrestrial linear broadcast that the digital transformation has brought about. The MStV includes forms from streaming to social media, as well as blogs and even voice assistants like Amazon's Alexa. The MStV's reach indicates something of the deep transformation and almost constant disruption of these last decades.

As the name of the older treaty suggests, it had previously largely regulated a broadcast world dominated by radio and television. In 1987, the RStV organized a system of linear broadcast, in which cable and satellite were only starting to compete for the console television's terrestrial antenna reception. Video home systems had become popular during the 1980s, making it possible to play back broadcasts later, but audiences largely participated in a broadcast world regulated by certain structures and rituals bound to the standardization of broadcast times. The evening news in the GDR, *Aktuelle Kamera*, was broadcast at 7:30 p.m. and in the West *Tagesschau* at 8 p.m. Before and after the news, stations planned time slots for revue and game shows, sitcoms, and political interviews. Since the 1970s the West and East German audiences have both enjoyed competing crime dramas—*Tatort* in the West and *Polizeiruf 110* in the East. Only two years later, in 1989, Tim Berners-Lee would establish the basis for the World Wide Web at CERN in Geneva, but for the RStV the developments of Web 2.0 and its impact on the broadcast world remained hidden. Digital, streaming, Video on Demand, YouTube, and social media all had to wait until the future for their opportunity to disrupt the broadcast system and compel the new regulation of the MStV.

Of course in its early years, the World Wide Web did not seem to be any direct form of disruption or competition to existing big screen, small screen relations. That was a relation defined largely by taxes on ticket sales and levies on household screens. Even when Netflix entered the Video on Demand market, it at first seemed a minor player. However, as we have discussed here, streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video instigated a fundamental transformation of the market,

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rupturing terrestrial broadcast models that had dominated decades of programming strategies in public and private broadcasters, as well as theatrical exhibition, compelling a multi-screen viewer experience.

Just as the emergence of broadcast television was denounced in the 1970s as disrupting the established industry, a wave of critical voices decrying the death of TV and cinema has arisen. And yet, something new has emerged instead. If the 1980s and the first decade of the new millennium were denounced as a cinema of consensus, those critical voices that expressed a nostalgia for the "political work" of state-subsidized production in the 1970s now run a risk of becoming simply reactionary when rejecting the outpouring of new modes of longform storytelling and shortform image making.

A New Generation of Disrupters

This "disruption" of media in Germany has opened up space for a younger generation breaking through into what was a closed market. It is reminiscent of the dynamic initiated by the rebels in Oberhausen whose 1962 manifesto set off the transformations of the celebrated New German Cinema. Now the new generation has venues that bypass the established public private companies. A new niche market orientation toward specific audiences and data driven production on a small scale ruptures the control of executive producers in favor of creatives: the race for content.

To be sure, Netflix, Amazon, Apple TV, Google, and YouTube all operate in an economic model that extracts value and reduces payout, but the conditions of vertical integration that maintain that economic model are fragmenting quickly. Synergistically, Netflix sales can raise the audience for national broadcasters: BBC's *Peaky Blinders*, ZDF's *Babylon Berlin* or Antenne 3's *Money Heist* would have been impossible as mass critical and audience successes without the permeability to Netflix. We have entered into new models where once obsolete technology giants like Telekom develop originals for national broadcast while also then offering Amazon Prime Video as a platform to its subscribers.

The Public Broadcasters and Their Media Libraries

Jonas Schlatterbeck is responsible for the *Mediathek* of the ARD. The Mediathek, as already noted, is the online VoD library of the broadcast-

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ers, and it serves as the center of the ARD's streaming services, the site where the public broadcaster offers streaming material to compete with Netflix, as it were. It is here that the ARD undertook the experiment with *All You Need*, discussed earlier in this chapter, as the first direct to media library production. In a recent interview with media journalist Alexander Soyez, Schlatterbeck described how the media library had experienced unprecedented demand during the lockdown phases of the pandemic.[50] The growth can be understood as an acceleration of the trend away from linear broadcast models that had dominated radio and television almost from their starts, toward VoD and other types of nonlinear steaming services. In the interview, Schlatterbeck provided a vision of the public broadcaster of the future. Importantly he did not suggest that the media library would be a replacement for linear broadcast; the majority of the television audience does still sit down in front of the television to watch the news programs, crime dramas, and so on at set times. For instance, on Sundays the 8:00 p.m. news followed by *Tatort* at 8:15 p.m. offers a ritual viewing experience so strong in Germany that the time slot for the popular television crime story has generated public viewings in bars, cafes, and other such places. Schlatterbeck rather treats his part of the offerings of the ARD as a mechanism for gaining new post-linear television audiences. For instance, Schlatterbeck identified *All You Need*, the dramedy focused on the interwoven stories of two gay friends in Berlin, as breaking new ground for the public broadcasters. A long way from the controversy of *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers*, it addressed a specific market demographic without an assumption that it would broadcast into all German living rooms. Produced to stream directly in the media library, it had no terrestrial broadcast, in effect paralleling some of the developments in which Amazon and Netflix have produced feature films direct for streaming, bypassing the cinema release.

For Schlatterbeck, however, the offerings in the media library should hence distinguish themselves from the offerings of the market leaders of the streaming services like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+. Schlatterbeck described *All You Need* as representing the goal to develop content paired to the goals of the media library. He understands the direction of the ARD as having to run parallel to the developments on Netflix and other large streaming services; yet in spite of them having set a new standard for streaming, the goal should not be to offer the same content. The "user experience" should be replicated, allowing for an ease of use and a capturing of interest that leads to continued viewing, or binge viewing. However, the content should not

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simply imitate the offerings on Netflix—imitations will always appear as imitations. Schlatterbeck describes the public broadcasters as having a different role, to "educate, inform, and also entertain." Documentary production on the public broadcasters is much stronger than the offerings on Netflix, representing precisely their commitment to educate.[51]

Exclusive productions versus original programming, once a tool of a quasi-distinction between cinema and broadcast, now become a market restrictive technique. "German" content then, like *Babylon Berlin*, *Ku'damm*, *Freud*, or *Dark*, becomes a marketing tool with content developed by media boards in a new agreement with the media libraries of the networks and the streaming platforms like Netflix. In such deals, when the exclusive rights are over, the production can go from the media library to other platforms. And in terms of production financing, Netflix is now a major "studio" at a time when other European-based streaming platforms act as distributors. These distributors focus on customer curation, while Telekom and its Magenta service morphs into an aggregator of content, offering the customer what they want—and the customer sometimes wants to be an informed citizen, and sometimes a couch potato.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to develop a model of analysis that is not based on cycles of crisis; ongoing sector transformation brings forth both disruption and harmonization. Technical innovation corresponds to changing audience expectations. New means of communication generate new ways to tell new stories. Although I have not undertaken specific image analysis, I have sought to relate the content of production to the technological, economic, and political apparatus out of which those images arise.

From the market predictions discussed at the opening of this chapter to the run through a much longer history of shifts and transformations, we can distill a few recurring themes. First, for critics and scholars of German film and television, the current moment invites us to consider how television and film production are, and have been, interconnected in Germany and throughout Europe. Television production organized on the basis of national and regional broadcasting stations may appear limited to national and local audiences, but stepping back to consider the horizontal and vertical structure of the audiovisual sector allows us to recognize the broadcast network as part of European and global

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media markets. Second, technological innovations, like streaming, do disrupt aspects of the industry, in this case cinema exhibition *and* broadcast; however, an overview of the longer history of film and media production reveals that the constant dynamic of disruption/innovation is part of another: convergence/market expansion. And lastly, the interests of cinema spectators are not served by only one form of production (i.e., arthouse feature films); rather a breadth of audiovisual production builds audiences for moving image projects we can describe as quality TV and film.

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Notes

1. Hembus, *Der deutsche Film kann gar nicht besser sein*; Fischer and Hembus, *Der neue deutsche Film*; Rentschler, *West German Film in the Course of Time*; Elsaesser, *New German Cinema*; Pflaum and Prinzler, *Film in Der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*; Hake, *German National Cinema*; Jacobsen, Kaes, and Prinzler, *Geschichte des deutschen Films*; Grob, Prinzler, and Rentschler, *Neuer deutscher Film*.
2. Prümm, "Film und Fernsehen," 545.
3. Koljonen, "Nostradamus Report," 7.
4. "Finanzielle Auswirkungen von Covid-19 Auf Kinobetreiber."
5. Goldhammer et al., "Gutachten zu den Auswirkungen."
6. Smith and Baer, "*Babylon Berlin*."
7. Council of Europe, *European Audiovisual Observatory*; Fontaine, Blázquez, and Cappello, "Key Trends."
8. Feuer, Kerr, and Vahimagi, *Mtm Quality Television*; McCabe and Akass, *Quality TV*; Nesselhauf and Schleich, *Das andere Fernsehen?!*
9. "Programmkinos in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland."
10. King, *Quality Hollywood*; King, *Indiewood, USA*.
11. Galt and Schoonover, *Global Art Cinema*; Fisher and Prager, *Collapse of the Conventional*.
12. Fontaine, Blázquez, and Cappello, "Key Trends."
13. Nesselhauf and Schleich, *Das andere Fernsehen?!*
14. Fuechtner and Lerner, "*Babylon Berlin*"; Krauß, "When German Series Go Global."

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15. Kreimeier, *The UFA Story*; Rogowski, *The Many Faces*.
16. Canjels, *Distributing Silent Film Serials*.
17. Hembus, *Der deutsche Film kann gar nicht besser sein*; Fischer and Hembus, *Der neue deutsche Film*; Lewandowski, *Die Oberhausener*; Franklin, *New German Cinema*; Rentschler, *West German Filmmakers on Film*; Prinzler and Rentschler, *Augenzeugen*; Elsaesser, *New German Cinema*; Pflaum and Prinzler, *Film in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*; Knight, *Women and the New German Cinema*; Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat*; Davidson, *Deterritorializing the New German Cinema*; Gemünden, *Framed Visions*; Rentschler, "From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus"; Hake, *German National Cinema*; Jacobsen, Kaes, and Prinzler, *Geschichte des deutschen Films*; Flinn, *The New German Cinema*; Knight, *New German Cinema*; McCormick and Guenther-Pal, *German Essays on Film*; Eue and Gass, *Provokation Der Wirklichkeit*; Grob, Prinzler, and Rentschler, *Neuer deutscher Film*.
18. Faupel, *Medien im Wettstreit*; Hillrichs and Ungureit, *Filmkultur, Filmverbrauch*; Blaney, *Symbiosis or Confrontation?*
19. Elsaesser, *New German Cinema*, 31.
20. Gumbert, *Envisioning Socialism*, 27.
21. Dittmar, *Feindliches Fernsehen*; Gumbert, *Envisioning Socialism*.
22. Schenk, *Eine kleine Geschichte der DEFA*.
23. Hickethier and Hoff, *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens*, 153.
24. Ibid., 157.
25. Typically cited are the premieres of *Abschied von Gestern* [Yesterday Girl] (1966), *Schonzeit für Füchse* [No Shooting Time for Foxes] (1966), *Es* [It] (1966), *Der junge Törless* [Young Törless] (1966).
26. Hickethier and Hoff, *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens*, 219.
27. Ibid., 248.
28. For the latest version, see https://www.ffa.de/index.php?id=1.
29. The most recent version of the agreement can be found at https://www.ffa.de/ffg-regelsammlung.html.
30. Karstens and Schütte, *Firma Fernsehen*; Hickethier and Hoff, *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens*.
31. Forster and Knieper, "50 Years of Television Broadcasting."
32. Schreitmüller and Stein, *Freispiele*.
33. Hickethier and Hoff, *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens*, 348; Knight, *Women and the New German Cinema*.
34. Heinemann, "Schwierigkeiten mit einem Tabu"; Halle, "Rainer, Rosa, and Werner"; Halle, "From Perverse to Queer"; Halle, "Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers."
35. Schenk, *Eine kleine Geschichte der DEFA*; Gumbert, *Envisioning Socialism*.
36. Hickethier and Hoff, *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens*.
37. Pleitgen and Biermann, *Die Ausbürgerung*; Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition*.
38. Feldmann et al., *Wer ist denn hier der Verfassungsfeind!*; Jacobsen, Kaes, and Prinzler, *Geschichte des deutschen Films*, 262; Elsaesser, *New German Cinema*; Rentschler, *West German Film in the Course of Time*.
39. Prinzler and Rentschler, *Augenzeugen*; Rentschler, *West German Filmmakers on Film*.
40. Halle and McCarthy, *Light Motives*.
41. Devlin, "Commercial Onslaught"; Emery, "Radio Luxembourg."
42. Halle, *German Film after Germany*.
43. Rentschler, "From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus."
44. Halle, *The Europeanization of Cinema*; Halle, *German Film after Germany*.

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45. Coleman, "Contending with 'Unity in Diversity'"; Halle, *German Film after Germany*; Nenova, "The New Audiovisual Media Services Directive"; Krebber, *Europeanisation of Regulatory Television Policy*; Dupagne, "EC Policymaking"; European Commission, Television Broadcasting Activities.
46. Halle, *German Film after Germany*; Halle, *The Europeanization of Cinema*.
47. Baer, *German Cinema in the Age of Neoliberalism*.
48. Halle, *German Film after Germany*.
49. Krauß, "Im Angesicht der 'Qualitätsserie'"; Klug, *Scripted Reality*; Nesselhauf and Schleich, *Das andere Fernsehen?!*
50. Soyez, "Wie sieht die Mediathek der Zukunft aus, Herr Schlatterbeck?"
51. Ibid.

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Chapter 2

Reenacting Propaganda

Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* and the Anti-Nazi War Film

A. Dana Weber

> A great many folks in the world have toyed fondly with the dream of taking a pot shot at Hitler from some convenient blind.
>
> —Bosley Crowther, "*Man Hunt*"[1]

"[T]hey were beginning to understand that a bored and wealthy Englishman who had hunted all commoner game might well find a perverse pleasure in hunting the biggest game on earth," reminisces the anonymous first-person protagonist in Geoffrey Household's anti-Nazi novel *Rogue Male* (1939). Although the "biggest game on earth" remains unnamed, in the year in which the Nazis invaded Poland, started their aggressive military expansion in Europe, and Britain declared war on Germany, Household's readers had no trouble understanding the transparent allusion: the "biggest game" was Adolf Hitler. *Rogue Male* tells the protagonist's story of flight from the Nazis ("they") who captured him after he had aimed his rifle at the "biggest game" and turned the hunter into the hunted.[2] Although "he" eventually succeeds in defeating his nemesis, a Nazi intelligence officer called Quive-Smith, the novel remains open-ended. The "biggest game" is still at large, inviting others to pursue it.

During World War Two, the idea of killing Hitler was often implied in anti-Nazi films but remained an unfulfilled fantasy because none of the actual assassination attempts succeeded. *Man Hunt* (1941), Dudley Nichols's screen adaptation of Household's novel directed by Fritz Lang, gave "the biggest game" its face and name. A few years later,

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in spring 1945, Hitler and several of his acolytes (Joseph Goebbels included) died by suicide when they realized that the war was lost, thus escaping justice and thwarting the happy ending anticipated by anti-Nazi propaganda. The idea of killing Hitler is back in full force in Quentin Tarantino's film *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), where it drives Jewish anti-Nazi fighters not merely to kill, but to destroy the dictator and his entourage completely by shooting them to pieces in a cinema. This location is meaningful for Tarantino's take on World War Two films, among which *Man Hunt* is particularly prominent. Choosing in this chapter to juxtapose *Man Hunt* and *Inglourious Basterds* (out of all the anti-Nazi productions since the war) has, therefore, been motivated not only by the iconic status and global popularity of both films, but also by the contemporary production's intertextual references to its predecessor as stand-in for all anti-Nazi war films of its era.

As Randall Halle has shown, war films are transnational par excellence.[3] Not only do *Man Hunt* and *Inglourious Basterds* belong to this genre, but the transnational theme of international mobility plays a crucial role in their plots, their production locations (the Hollywood studios during the war and the contemporary Babelsberg studios, formerly centers of Weimar and Nazi era film production[4]), and the continuities between their directing and cinematographic methods that this chapter will discuss. Yet whereas the internationalism of *Man Hunt* emerged out of need in a specific historical context that forced involuntary mass displacement and a rapid restructuring of international relations, *Inglourious Basterds'* mobility (as a US film produced in Germany with an international cast and crew) was, as we will see, motivated at least in part by its reception of Lang's film specifically, and of German cinema in the first half of the twentieth century generally. Further, as Benedict Schofield has pointed out for British–German theater, transnational transfers always depend on reception, on how performance artists understand and interpret international cultural forms in their works.[5] This insight can be applied to cinema as well, and is particularly illuminating for *Inglourious Basterds*, a work that illustrates a specific reception and reinterpretation of World War Two history, as this chapter argues. This reception is apparent not only at the narrative level, but also in Tarantino's (at least partial, not necessarily deliberate) reenactment of wartime transnational filmmaking.

"Reenactment" here refers to the attempt to re-experience a past activity or event performatively by replicating its historical parameters as closely as possible in its original historical location. By this particular form of reception, *Inglourious Basterds* not only reflects its makers'

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transnational appreciation of German film history, but also reminds us of what has been true for the relations between German and US cinema all along: that neither has ever existed in a "hermeneutic vacuum,"[6] and that both have always been trans- and international.[7] The chapter thus contributes to the extensive research on the intertextuality of Tarantino's oeuvre in which Lang's role is not often addressed,[8] and positions both films in the transnational popular culture framework that is at the center of this volume.

Anti-Nazi Narratives as Narratives of Mobility

Characteristically for transnational films, international movement drives the plots of *Man Hunt* and *Inglourious Basterds*. *Man Hunt* begins in Germany, near Hitler's lair in the Alps, then moves on to London where British big-game hunter and sniper Captain Alan Thorndike (Walter Pidgeon), as Household's anonymous protagonist is now called, flees the Nazis, who pursue him. The film ends in geographic and narrative suspension as Thorndike parachutes himself back into Germany, determined to shoot Hitler, and starting a new turn of the plot's mobility spiral that closes in on the dictator.

Inglourious Basterds accomplishes the goal of anti-Nazi propaganda fictionally owing to extensive transatlantic and intracultural mobility. The titular Basterds, a group of American guerilla fighters (most of them European-born or second-generation Jews) arrive in Nazi-occupied France to kill the occupiers. So does Lt. Archie Hicox (Michael Fassbender), a British Weimar-era film critic turned officer, who is dispatched from London to collaborate with them. The Nazis' expansion into France reflects their own military mobility, and even Shosanna Dreyfus (Melanie Laurent), a French-Jewish cinema owner and anti-Nazi filmmaker, has first to flee from the French countryside to Paris for the plot to proceed. The concentration of these mobility strands in the French capital brings about the demise of the Nazi leadership. Sacrificing themselves, the Basterds shoot the Führer and his entourage during the premiere of *Nation's Pride*, a propaganda film produced by Joseph Goebbels (Sylvester Groth), at Shosanna's cinema. On this occasion, the Basterds' plan converges with Shosanna's scheme to destroy the Nazis: she asks her African-French lover Marcel (Jacki Ido), a projectionist who is not allowed to work in Nazi-occupied Paris, to set her cinema on fire by igniting a pile of highly flammable nitrate films behind the projection screen.[9] Although Shosanna and the Basterds know

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nothing of each other's presence or plans, their conjoint action succeeds, and they destroy Hitler and his entourage. Although Shosanna and most of the Basterds sacrifice their lives to their missions, the movement does not stop. After the massacre, the United States Army High Command grants Austrian-born Nazi security officer and everyone's nemesis Colonel Hans Landa (Christoph Waltz) free passage to the United States, as well as property on Nantucket Island for his role in killing Hitler. (Despite his service to the Nazis, he had discovered but not betrayed the Basterds' plan, and had placed dynamite under Hitler's and Goebbels's seats himself.)

The crossing of transatlantic and European borders thus drives the plots of both films, and their ends promise even more mobility.[10] Will Thorndike survive and return to London victoriously? Will the surviving Basterds, First Lieutenant Aldo Raine aka "the Apache" (Brad Pitt), the group's leader, and PFC Utivic (B.J. Novak) stop Landa, who might plot to help German troops infiltrate the United States as the Nantucket reference suggests?[11] And, finally, will America resist the potential Nazi threat? Productions made after *Inglourious Basterds* toy with the idea that it does not. But where Tarantino's film—like the wartime anti-Nazi productions—leaves the future to the imagination of the viewers, movies such as Dani Levy's *Mein Führer* (My Führer) (2007), Timo Vuorensola's *Iron Sky* (2012), and David Wnendt's *Er ist wieder da* (Look Who's Back) (2015), as well as the US television show *The Man in the High Castle* (2015–19) imagine alternative histories and presents in which the Nazis have won or return. These productions criticize current fascist tendencies in politics and society. Cinematographically, they exemplify beyond Tarantino's film how creatively history is treated in contemporary mainstream popular culture.

The emphasis on mobility in *Man Hunt* and *Inglourious Basterds* is not only geographical but also extends to their gender constellations, which are comparable in some points, although Tarantino's female characters are stronger and more nuanced than Lang's. *Man Hunt*'s Jerry (Joan Bennett), a sex worker who helps Thorndike in London, never leaves her city but savvily moves within it. Her actions rescue the fugitive from the Nazis, preserving his mobility. In *Inglourious Basterds*, Shosanna's movement is restricted to France, where she moves from a rural to an urban environment but that of Bridget von Hammersmark (Diane Kruger), the Nazi film star and British agent who procures the Basterds access to the premiere of *Nation's Pride*, crosses the borders between Germany and France, and possibly the United Kingdom. Beyond the significance of their spatial mobilities in the fight against Na-

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zis, the women in both films reflect the idea of social mobility (or the absence thereof) in the resourceful, streetwise woman and the glamourous socialite. As streetwise as Lang's Jerry, but not as trapped socially, Tarantino's Shosanna is a Jewish country girl who has moved upward by inheriting the cinema selected for the premiere of *Nation's Pride*. This selection is motivated by the fact that the film's star, Private Zoller (Daniel Brühl), a sniper and film buff, has fallen for her. (As she is using the name Emmanuelle Mimieux, he does not realize that Shosanna is Jewish.[12]) Moreover, Shosanna's ingenuity contributes to the downfall of Nazi Germany: she produces a film reel giving "Germany" a "message" of Jewish revenge that she edits into *Nation's Pride*. And whereas *Man Hunt*'s female socialite makes only a quick appearance as Thorndike's aristocratic and naive relative that is as stuck in her social position as Jerry is in hers, glamorous and politically mobile von Hammersmark plays a substantial role in the anti-Nazi operation. Like Jerry, Shosanna pays with her life for her actions. Landa's strangling von Hammersmark also evokes associations with Jerry's (unseen) death at the hands of Nazi agents in *Man Hunt*.[13] Finally, the female characters of both films are involved in romantic plotlines with their own implications of transnational and social mobility. Jerry falls in love with the aristocrat Thorndike who understands her affection only too late. Had he done so earlier, a relationship between the two might have supported the sex worker's upward social move and saved her life. Still, Thorndike finally sets off to kill Hitler "under her banner" (Jerry's arrow-shaped brooch becomes his war symbol) combining overdue social (toward Jerry) with anticipatory geographic-political movement. Likewise, the German Zoller is smitten with the French Shosanna, who loathes him for being a Nazi but also seems attracted to the dashing cinephile soldier. Their romance does not blossom either, as both kill each other in a "Romeo and Juliet shootout" that prevents the unfolding of a transnational, Jewish-French-German *affaire de coeur*.[14]

The plot overviews so far have revealed general parallels between the transnational mobility narratives of *Man Hunt* and *Inglourious Basterds*. The following comparative reading of two interrogation scenes—of Thorndike by Quive-Smith (George Sanders) and of Perrier LaPadite (Denis Menochet) by Landa—pinpoints these parallels more specifically. The goal of the comparison is to highlight the subtle ways in which the contemporary film echoes the wartime one in order to emphasize Tarantino's interest in Lang's work and further support the two films' conjoint analysis.[15] Once again, the reading underscores the transnational elements of both productions, this time in the form of cultural props and foreign languages.

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Nazis and Smoke Screens: Cultural and Linguistic Transnationalism

In *Man Hunt*, Hitler's guards capture Thorndike while he is aiming his rifle at the dictator, and then torture him. When Quive-Smith meets the ill-treated Brit in his office later, he offers him a seat and lights him a cigarette. Quive-Smith greets Thorndike cordially because he is familiar with his fame as a hunter, but also claims smugly that he would have become an even better hunter had he not chosen politics as the more interesting "playfield." The subsequent conversation between the two men focuses on the natural isolation of Hitler's "house"[16] and big-game hunting. Quive-Smith informs Thorndike that

> this is the most closely guarded house in the world . . . I would have staked my life that no living thing could have entered this area without being seen. But then, we didn't count upon a creature that has learned to stalk upon the most cunning animal . . . that can catch scents upon the wind, that has mastered the trick of moving through a forest as if he were *transparent*.[17] . . . Look out there: for five hundred yards, not a tree, not a shrub. A man running toward this house would be cut down before he'd taken *five* . . . *steps*. And yet, on that ledge above, was a man with a precision rifle, and with the degree of intelligence and skill that is required to use it.[18]

Thorndike tries to explain that he had only attempted a "sporting stalk," which involves getting as close as possible to the game without being detected. Achieving such a position requires the hunter to match his wits against the instincts of the animal. But as Thorndike sees it, hunting consists only of the chase, not of the killing—it had not been his intention to shoot. (His gun had fired inadvertently in the scuffle with the attacking Nazi guard.)

During the rest of the conversation, Quive-Smith misunderstands Thorndike twice. When the Brit speaks of the biggest game on earth, the Nazi officer interprets this as "man," whereas the audience understands that he means Hitler. Also, Quive-Smith does not comprehend the concept of a "sporting stalk." In his view, all armed stalking has one purpose only: killing. A debate over principles emerges from here, in which Quive-Smith and Thorndike insult each other's nations as weak and decadent (Britain) and barbarous and primitive (Nazi Germany). The scene ends with Thorndike refusing to sign a document claiming that he had committed an assassination attempt on Hitler in the service of his government (such a document would have caused a war), and Quive-Smith handing him over to his henchmen for more torture.

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Figure 2.1. Interrogation scenes in *Man Hunt* and *Inglourious Basterds*. Screenshots by A. Dana Weber.

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During this scene, Thorndike sits smoking at a chess table while the Nazi officer paces the room. Most shots are wide or medium shots, with only a few close-ups. As the camera follows Quive-Smith, it reveals props with symbolic meaning, from a lamp shade decorated with the lyrics and notes of a German mensural hymn about petitioning God for help, to statues of St. Sebastian perforated by arrows and St. Christophorus, the patron of travelers. These items reflect the Brit's situation: he cannot expect any help from the Nazis, and is both a traveler and a victim. They also remind of a humanist tradition that had once been present in the German past. The Nazi state wishes to reclaim this past for itself, the set tells the viewers, but has discarded its humanism. Instead, a curtain hemmed in Grecian style and the statues of an eagle sitting on a globe and a Quadriga point to Germany as a Nazi state with ambitions to take over the world. Finally, the chessboard is readily recognizable as an allusion to the iconic game between Sultan Saladin and his sister Sittah in G.E. Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* (Nathan the Wise, 1779). In this theater play, the game serves as a lesson in Enlightenment humanism and tolerance. In the Nazi context, the chess pieces are idle, and nobody pays attention to them; the conversation is not driven by a compassionate measuring of ethics against interests but by Quive-Smith's arrogant and treacherous "cat-and-mouse act" that—contrary to Lessing's scene—aims for war, not peace.[19]

In *Inglourious Basterds*, Landa's equally treacherous "cat-and-mouse act" with LaPadite unfolds on a less ornate stage, the farmer's home, where its effect results mainly from dialogue and acting as the cinematography progresses from medium shots to increasingly more extreme close-ups of the protagonists' faces. Before the beginning of the interrogation, viewers are introduced to the French dairy farm's location, a location that is structurally similar to the "house" in *Man Hunt*. As *Inglourious Basterds*' first shots inform us, LaPadite's home lies among grass-covered, mellow hills. "No living thing" could approach it "without being seen"; around the farm, there is for "five hundred yards, not a tree, not a shrub." The farmer and the audience are thus given ample opportunity to observe the arrival of Landa's cavalcade in increasingly tense real time. Once inside, the props in *Inglourious Basterds* illustrate LaPadite's farmhouse as a modest and ordinary, albeit hospitable, home, not of a specific cultural history as those in *Man Hunt*. In both films, however, the initially reassuring effect of objects is soon inversed by the Nazis' brutal actions: Thorndike is tortured again and LaPadite's home, which had hitherto offered a safe hideout to Jewish fugitives, becomes the site of their murder.

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The interrogations conducted in these settings follow a comparable course. Just as Quive-Smith knows Thorndike from his reputation as a hunter, LaPadite knows Landa. "The people of France," the Nazi officer declares, call him "the Jew Hunter," and he is proud of this reputation that he has "earned." (LaPadite admits being aware of this reputation.) Echoing how Quive-Smith characterizes Thorndike's hunting skills through animal comparisons and national stereotypes, Landa then characterizes himself:

> The feature that makes me such an effective hunter of the Jews is—as opposed to most German soldiers—I can *think* like a Jew, when they can only think like a German. [Snickering] . . . Now, if one were to determine what attribute the German people share with the beast, there would be the cunning and the predatory instinct of a hawk. But if one were to determine what attributes the Jews share with the beast, it would be that [*sic*] of the rat. The Führer and Goebbels's propaganda have said pretty much the same thing, but where our conclusions differ, is, I don't consider the comparison an insult.[20]

While the conversation between Quive-Smith and Thorndike progresses from big-game hunting to the hunting of people, that between LaPadite and Landa shifts from chasing human beings to identifying them (and their hunters) with beasts—an identification that emphasizes the Nazi regime's disregard for humanity even more strongly than *Man Hunt*'s interrogation. Yet in both films, emotions shift similarly while the characters smoke, with Landa's imposing calabash meerschaum pipe comically dwarfing LaPadite's modest corn cob one. Like Thorndike, LaPadite is not sure what to expect at first, but he becomes gradually more self-assured owing to his interlocutor's seemingly well-mannered conversation. Once their victims are at ease and believe the worst is over, however, their Nazi opponents strike. Quive-Smith wants to force Thorndike to sign a false confession, and Landa—who has fiddled with documents for some time, miming the bureaucrat—forces LaPadite to give away the hiding place of his Jewish neighbors. (Landa had already guessed this place anyway.) In the end, smoking, considered a social activity by many, has proven a lure in *Man Hunt* and a threat in *Inglourious Basterds*: Thorndike and LaPadite are discouraged and defeated at least for the moment. The fronts are established and no doubts remain about the Nazis' inhumanity. But the consequences of the interrogations propel the plots forward. Thorndike succeeds in fleeing his captors, undergoes a change of heart regarding the "sporting stalk," and will not rest until he is on his way to kill Hitler. Landa's soldiers kill

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Shosanna's Jewish family, but she escapes, preparing the way for the eventual destruction of Hitler and the entire Nazi leadership.

The interrogation scenes not only reveal narrative affinities between *Man Hunt* and *Inglourious Basterds* but also illustrate a prominent transnational characteristic of war films, namely their use of foreign languages. Quive-Smith, for example, is shown barking orders in German before Thorndike is brought to him, as well as when he calls for his victim to be picked up. The hymnal inscribed on the lamp shade and the chess game recall German religious and humanist texts, contrasting them with the brutal Nazi appropriation of the language. In contrast to *Man Hunt*'s earnest urge to redeem German cultural values by communicative means such as these, *Inglourious Basterds*' juxtaposition of foreign languages is more humorous in a contemporary sense—at least in the beginning. Landa's and LaPadite's dialogue highlights especially Landa's perfect multilingualism in several switches between French, English, and German, but the reasons why a French farmer speaks fluent English are not explained. Appearing first as historical nonchalance, this detail turns out to be a dangerous lure that turns comedy into discomfort. When Landa switches to English, Tarantino's scene forces the audience (assumed to be Anglophone) to participate in a language that the Jews hidden under LaPadite's floorboards supposedly do not understand. (Exploiting this linguistic deficiency is the narrative motivation of the switch.) The ensuing English conversation during which the Nazi officer extorts their hiding place from the French farmer transforms viewers into increasingly distressed witnesses who cannot warn those who are in danger and are thus put in the inescapable position of participating in the Nazi crime.[21] By contrast, the French and German portions of this scene use subtitles that ensure understanding but also distance from the used foreign languages. Such distance is not granted toward the language of perpetration, its absence confronting the audience with the discomforting quandary of unwanted yet inevitable collaboration.[22]

Far more emphasized in *Inglourious Basterds* than in *Man Hunt*, which uses only German and several English accents, the multilingual abilities of Tarantino's characters—or the absence thereof—underline their cultural specificity. For instance, some of the Basterds' lack of foreign language knowledge has been interpreted as a "self-satisfied American exceptionalism expressed as obstinate monolingualism."[23] While this monolingualism no doubt references an actual US reservation toward foreign languages and is best represented in the monolingual Aldo who speaks only a Southern US variant of English, this lack of linguistic

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knowledge nevertheless integrates über-domestic US characters like Aldo plausibly and also self-ironically into the film's international context: men like these fought in the war alongside multilingual immigrants and German comrades like the Basterds Cpt. Wilhelm Wicki (Gedeon Burkhard) and Sgt. Hugo Stiglitz (Til Schweiger).

Ever since World War Two, linguistic diversity has remained the strongest international signifier of war films, so that actors might be cast for their language skills, which in turn depend to no small degree on their nationality. As Jan-Christopher Horak observes about émigré filmmaking in Hollywood, German actors were cast in ninety percent of the anti-Nazi films made between 1939 and 1946, and the same was the case with those from countries occupied or dominated by Nazi Germany.[24] Accordingly, although most of *Man Hunt*'s cast is mainly American and British, some of the minor and uncredited characters (especially Hitler and the Nazis) are of Austrian, German, Norwegian, and Swedish descent. As per Household's novel, Quive-Smith is German-British, justifying the role's casting with Sanders, a British actor who speaks excellent German. *Inglourious Basterds* is even more attentive to nationally and linguistically accurate casting. Landa is only so convincing because, also in reality, Waltz, an Austrian just like his character, is fluent in English, French, and Italian. Moreover, Tom Tykwer's elegant translation of the film's German dialogues not only adds to *Inglourious Basterds*' cultural plausibility, but also follows in Lang's footsteps, who had done the same to ensure Quive-Smith's and his henchmen's authenticity of speech in *Man Hunt*.[25] Tykwer's and Lang's linguistic contributions thus enhanced the two films' international profiles, besides both directors being Babelsberg-savvy, transnationally influential filmmakers in their own right. However, Lang's Hollywood welcomed accents in anti-Nazi films not because of an earnest interest in the accuracy of representation, but because they offered a general "audible European ambiance."[26] Beyond that, "European" roles were stereotypical, and the match between the characters' and the casts' national backgrounds mattered little. *Man Hunt*'s linguistic authenticity therefore exceeds the customary level in wartime Hollywood, and points toward the film's high production quality that it shares with *Inglourious Basterds*.[27]

While these narrative, cinematographic, and linguistic parallels reveal key interfilmic references between Lang's and Tarantino's productions, which audiences may or may not notice, explicit references to Lang appear in the broader production context of *Inglourious Basterds*. In interviews, the American director confirmed that he had been "very

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influenced" by Hollywood's anti-Nazi propaganda movies made during the war, *Man Hunt* among them,[28] and that these productions caused him to focus *Inglourious Basterds* on "the premiere of a German propaganda film"[29] made under Goebbels as the studio head.[30] One aspect that impressed Tarantino in particular was these productions' transnationalism—the fact that they had been made by expatriate European directors who had had personal experiences with the Nazis.[31]

Moreover, in a faux behind-the-scenes feature, Eli Roth, the actual director of *Nation's Pride*, gives a "making-of" interview as Alois von Eichberg, the film's fictional one.[32] This faux feature may have not been

Figure 2.2. Fritz Lang and "Alois von Eichberg" (Eli Roth) in interview. Screenshots by A. Dana Weber.

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included in *Inglourious Basterds* for various reasons, the most obvious being that Roth was also cast as Basterd Sgt. Donny Donowitz, the "Bear Jew."[33] In the feature, Roth declares with an exaggerated German accent that his production is a "very great film that I have directed for Joseph Goebbels and the German film industry . . . When I made this film, I was not thinking of this trash like, Fritz Lang [pronounces it "Laeeeeng"] . . . I wanted to make a film that really showed the power of Germany." Despite disavowing Lang, Roth's von Eichberg echoes Lang's outfit, posture, and laconic speech in an interview with William Friedkin conducted in 1974: he wears sunglasses, recalling Lang's dark eye patch, and holds up one of his hands, gesticulating.[34] Von Eichberg is also smoking, thus performing an action for which Lang was known in his private life and that he frequently represented in his films, *Man Hunt* included. Not least, smoking connects Roth's director character to the scenes in *Man Hunt* and *Inglourious Basterds* discussed above.

The Lang and von Eichberg interviews use medium shots of the interviewee responding to an interviewer positioned on the right. During both, Friedkin and Roth were young, upcoming US directors known for horror films: Friedkin for *The Exorcist* (1973) and Roth for *Hostel* (2005). While the participation of both confirms their reception of Lang's work, Roth switches roles with Lang and reverses a story that Lang had told Friedkin: that of his "flight" from Germany after Goebbels purportedly offered him to become "the leader of the German film."[35] Roth portrays a director *like* Lang, had he accepted the Propaganda Minister's offer and not left Nazi Germany for France in summer 1933 and the United States one year later.[36]

The Extended Transnationalism of War Films

As Halle shows, war films emphasize national differences through linguistic representation; but they also approach the historical record flexibly and have the capacity to create transnational communities of reception.[37] These criteria are relevant for this argument, not least because Halle derives them from films made at the Babelsberg studios since German reunification. *Inglourious Basterds* belongs among these films although it was made later than Halle's examples. But these criteria can be extended also to the anti-Nazi propaganda productions made in Hollywood during World War Two. As many German exile filmmakers and actors, including Lang, contributed their home-trained aesthetic formation and technical expertise to anti-Nazi productions during the

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war, while others (that the fictional von Eichberg alludes to) remained at home and served the Nazi cause, German filmmaking split into one strand that continued abroad and another that followed a domestic course. Although both shared a common repertoire of aesthetic sensibilities, narratives, and filmmaking methods, they were at war with one another on the screen. *Inglourious Basterds* offers its own interpretation of this cinematographic "war" that took place within the medium while the military war raged outside. Tarantino's film addresses this conflict when it shows how an anti-Nazi propaganda production (Shosanna's reel), its makers, and the Basterds, a squad of military fighters, combat a Nazi propaganda production (Goebbels's *Nation's Pride*), its makers, and the militaristic Nazi state represented by Landa and his men.

As *Inglourious Basterds* and *Man Hunt* fight on the same side in this conflict, it makes sense that their characters share similar transnational features. For instance, *Man Hunt* represents Thorndike as a wealthy, cosmopolitan "Englishman" of "Class X,"[38] and codes Quive-Smith ambiguously in that he could easily pass as either German or British. The movie thus juxtaposes two visual and acoustic types of gentlemanly Britishness: the stereotypically trustworthy one of the tweed-wearing, fair-playing, stiff-upper-lip aristocrat; and another, highly suspicious one, whose British sounds and genteel behavior are disconcertedly contradicted by its Nazi uniform and ideology.[39] *Man Hunt*'s other characters also embody various social and national backgrounds. Well-meaning and loyal British subjects (the shipmate, cockney sex worker, and naive aristocrats) are pitted against the Nazi military and agents who pursue Thorndike. *Inglourious Basterds*' warring characters are just as diverse socially and nationally, from the true-hearted French farmer, the cosmopolitan female Nazi film star and double agent of German extraction, and the Basterds' "muscular Jews," to the opportunistic Austrian polyglot and different types of German soldiers (heroes, cowards, mavericks).

Halle notes further that successful films create transnational, even global "communit[ies]" and "new social space[s]."[40] *Man Hunt* immediately generated such a community when the German exiles in California congratulated Lang for its anti-Nazi message in general and for showing Hitler "through the rifle scope" in particular.[41] Yet the reception of this message had its limits. *Man Hunt*'s anti-Nazi stance caused it to be first categorized as a "hate picture."[42] The Production Code Administration even requested changes such as the elimination of scenes representing Thorndike's torture by the Nazis. When the United States entered the war in December 1941, however, productions such as *Man Hunt* seemed "prescient and entirely correct."[43] Viewers outside the

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communities of exiles and political enemies of the Nazis could now join a larger international "community" united by the wish that someone would assassinate Hitler and end the Nazi regime, as *Man Hunt*'s finale called for. When *Inglourious Basterds* showed just that in 2009, the end of the Nazi regime was common knowledge. The global communities that this film has generated since then are not united by anticipation anymore, but rather by an uncomplicated mainstream morality in their interpretation of this familiar history. Fictional Nazis may be fascinating like Landa or brave like Zoller, but, like the historical ones, they must not be forgiven and deserve to be punished; antisemitism must be condemned, and it is only fair that those disavowed and oppressed strike back. Aside from this broad popular-cultural consensus and the questions it raises, in more restricted "social space[s]" such as fan groups, blogs, YouTube videos, and online reviews, film fans come together globally to uncover the seemingly interminable cinematographic references and subtexts of *Inglourious Basterds* that scholars also examine and interpret in their own forums (including this chapter).

By calling forth communities such as these, *Man Hunt* and *Inglourious Basterds* have already "*produce*[d] *culture*":[44] both have become classics with wide-ranging cultural reverberations. However, *Man Hunt* does not have the "cavalier relationship with historical accuracy" that Halle considers one of the hallmarks of current transnational war film.[45] *Man Hunt* tells a fictionalized yet plausible enough story about its own historical era and reflects some of this era's political ideals. In contrast, by its audacious twist of anti-Nazi fighters disintegrating Hitler and his acolytes, *Inglourious Basterds* far surpasses an only "cavalier" approach to the history that brought forth *Man Hunt*. This twist has meanwhile become history itself, and might well encourage the current production of alternative histories.[46] Nevertheless, *Inglourious Basterds* takes the history it engages with seriously. It tips its hat to historical anti-Nazi films, not only bringing their dream to life, but also replicating their fight against the Nazis and their propaganda machine by a double "occupation": that of the film medium as one of the war's historical theaters of conflict and that of the spaces and production methods appropriated by this machine.

Transnationalism and Production, Then and Now

Paralleling the mobility of their characters, Lang's and Tarantino's relocations across the Atlantic in the service of filmmaking are symptom-

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atic of an industry whose transnationalism might be its most enduring historical continuity and can rightfully be considered its "default frame of reference."[47] German and American cinema were always in each other's purview as competitors or partners, their relations shifting depending on historical context. In the 1920s, the only European film industry that could compete with Hollywood was the German one. During this decade, prominent directors such as F.W. Murnau, Ernst Lubitsch, Wilhelm Dieterle, and Paul Leni, producers such as Erich Pommer, and actors such as Emil Jannings and Conradt Veidt transitioned to Hollywood motivated by a European interest in American filmmaking on the one hand and the American studios' fear of competition and their efforts to accommodate European audiences on the other. Caused by Nazi persecutions in the 1930s, a new wave of transatlantic migration including actress Marlene Dietrich and Jewish-German filmmakers such as Lang, Otto Preminger, Douglas Sirk, and Billy Wilder, brought to Hollywood the cinematographic imagination, aesthetics, and talent that would lead to the rise of *film noir*.[48] In turn, during these two decades Hollywood studios established production and distribution companies in Germany where the film market was hotly contested by both industries.[49] Yet American cinema had already lost popularity before World War Two in Germany, and only regained its former ground in the Federal Republic after the war. In the interim, Nazi film established its own international networks with European and non-European cinema from countries such as Belgium, Hungary, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, and Spain. Although these relationships were made under duress owing to Nazi occupation, military alliances, and fascist affinities, the new distribution networks created difficulties for US companies in Europe.[50] And while German-born filmmakers and actors, many of them Jewish, sought refuge in Hollywood, Nazi filmmaking had no qualms drawing on "American techniques and popular genres" to create its own, successful entertainment films.[51]

In the wartime Hollywood of the 1930s and 1940s when Lang worked there, all members of a production would be under contract with, and at the disposal of, the studio. Hollywood studios created their productions completely "on the inside," including shooting the films on their own premises with limited location shots. They also distributed them in their own cinemas. In this environment, Lang was no longer the auteur he had been at Babelsberg's UFA but rather a hired hand. According to Nick Smedley, he did not participate fully in "the development of the themes [or] the content" of *Man Hunt* when he made the film at Twentieth Century-Fox.[52] What is more, the German direc-

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tor was assigned to the project only after John Ford had dropped out. As Smedley cautions, the film was therefore a corporate project, not to be confused with those of Lang's masterpieces in which he served as the auteur in sole control of the material and the production.[53] Lang's contribution nevertheless left its cinematographic and political mark on *Man Hunt*, such as in the scene of Thorndike's interrogation and in Quive-Smith's German dialogue passages discussed above. Lang also heavily cut, modified, and annotated the screenplay for the shooting, and "pictorialized"[54] it for production. Moreover, according to Lutz Koepnick, the four war films that Lang made in Hollywood—one of them *Man Hunt*—deliberately sought to develop "modes of cinematic representation" that would shake the hold that Nazi film had placed on the cinema of the time, and thus release "moving images from the grasp . . . of intended or unintended forms of collaboration."[55]

If it may seem unlikely to us today that Hollywood could have been influenced by the National Socialist regime, it is worth remembering that since the 1930s the US film industry "responded opportunistically to Nazi interventions and willingly removed unfavorable representations of contemporary Germany in order to secure the German and European export market."[56] And this for good (economic) reason: in 1940, for instance, Twentieth Century-Fox alone lost half a million dollars when the German expansion in Europe prevented the company from accessing European markets; other studios likely experienced similar drawbacks.[57] It is also the case that Hollywood did not welcome foreigners with open arms, and some Americans shared antisemitic sentiments quite like those of many Germans at that time, as Peter Lev has shown. For instance, when a Senate committee investigated Hollywood studios (including Fox) in 1941 for making pro-British war propaganda films (*Man Hunt* among them), some witnesses accused Hollywood of being "controlled by Jewish immigrants whose loyalties were suspect."[58] Partly Jewish himself, Lang may have been considered one of the "suspect" immigrants.[59] Against the grain of the opportunistic, discriminatory transnationalism of these political considerations, Lang worked at Fox in an international environment marked by foreign-born Americans and émigrés such as directors Jean Renoir, Ernst Lubitsch, and Elia Kazan, actors Ida Lupino and Jean Gabin, and the executive Spyros Skouros. The internal transnationalism of Hollywood studios was thus at odds with some ongoing political trends, at least until the United States entered the war.

Transnationalism is configured differently today compared to *Man Hunt*'s production context. *Inglourious Basterds*' transnationalism be-

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gins with its seventy-million-dollar budget, fourteen percent of which came from German sources.[60] When Tarantino and his US crew made the film in collaboration with European actors and staff members at the Babelsberg AG, "Europe's second-largest film production facility"[61] had already reached its current production structures. After two decades of transition and repeated reinvention in reunified Germany, the AG had become a shares corporation in 2004–5. Marketing themselves through the "Babelsberg myth" that alludes to the "golden age" of German cinema in the 1920s, the studios nevertheless foster collaborations with Hollywood and follow the Paramount production standard.[62] They currently offer services that cover the entire film production process, and they own state-of-the-art facilities such as the "Berliner Straße," which can reconstruct any street in the world.[63] (The facade of Shosanna's "Gamaar" cinema and its Paris street corner were built there.)[64] While the production style of the Babelsberg AG as a planning and coordinating service provider for outside producers resembles that of contemporary American film studios, the AG remains its own company and does not belong to media conglomerates as the large US studios tend to do, thus resembling an independent studio. This geographic, historical, and production space consequently offered Tarantino and his producer Lawrence Bender an ideal combination of a transnational work setting with a "mythical" history, the latest filmmaking technologies, and an economic framework echoing that of independent and auteur film, yet conducive to big-budget productions.

Performance, Reenactment, History

To be made, every film relies not only on actors and directors but on innumerous individual labor performances that intertwine in the interrelational and creative space of the production. From the hairstylist to the set designer, from the stunt person to the electricians, the joint efforts of creative workers generate the conditions for the actions that the camera records. Research fields such as anthropology, folklore, and performance studies as well as increasingly film and theater studies have long conceptualized performance works in view of the material, social, and historical dimensions of their production. This section engages with the creative substructure of *Inglourious Basterds* which is transnational along the lines discussed thus far. Crucially for Tarantino's work method on this production, this substructure reveals the reception of procedural, material, and technological elements of cinema history that

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has affinities with reenactments and implications for the overall interpretation of the film.

Reenactment studies have emerged from research on the activities of historical reenactors (for instance of the American Civil War or at heritage sites). The field now encompasses research on any "exact and punctual performance of a sequence of actions and gestures as laid down by rule and precedent," from ritual action and reviving and quoting anterior performances in theater and film, to documentary and legal reenactments, archeological reconstructions, and live-action role play (LARP).[65] Replicating actions and gestures from the past presupposes historical reception, yet this reception's "punctuality" and "exactitude" vary, as some reenactments are more invested in accurate historical reconstructions, while others are open to imaginary modifications. Nevertheless, all reenactments strive for authenticity at the level of the individual experience: if the encounter with the past seems physically and emotionally truthful to the practitioner, then the performance is successful regardless of the degree to which it replicates or not a historical precedent. A similar prioritizing of subjective preference over historical exactitude marks the post-reunification war films' "cavalier" approach to history, as noted earlier, identifying both this approach and reenactment as symptomatic of the popular-cultural attitude toward history in our time.[66] Besides the imaginary play with the past, the (faulty) repetition of historical moments moreover points to reenactments' efforts to "find faux fathers," as Rebecca Schneider argues.[67]

In the way it engages Weimar and Nazi film history, *Inglourious Basterds* tips its hat to some cinematographic "fathers" such as Lang, and oedipally destroys those that Alois von Eichberg stands for. Further, by its subject matter, production location, and creative techniques, Tarantino's film deliberately inserts itself into the history of the Babelsberg studios and thus of German cinema.[68] Just as reenactors may consult scholarly works about their favorite era or event, *Inglourious Basterds* references academic approaches to this history. Tarantino's Hicox is not perchance a Weimar era film critic and scholar whose books are entitled *The Art of the Eyes, the Heart, and the Mind* (echoing the triangulation of hand, heart, and mind in Lang's *Metropolis*[69]) and *Twenty-Four-Frame Da Vinci* (a study on Pabst). Ventriloquizing a term that Tarantino uses in his own film analyses, Hicox describes them as "subtextual criticism,"[70] thus pointing to the seriousness of *Inglourious Basterds*' historical reception.

The reenactment dimensions of Tarantino's film begin with the plot that revolves around *Nation's Pride*. The Nazi film dramatizes sniper

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Zoller's actual battle deeds by having him reenact them on celluloid. The fact that Goebbels produced this film implies "subtextually" that it had been made at the UFA Studios (today's Babelsberg AG) that were under the propaganda minister's control in 1944 when *Nation's Pride* premiere takes place. *Inglourious Basterds* recreates the context of the plot's Nazi premiere even at the level of the medium, in that not Tarantino but Roth directed *Nation's Pride*. When *Inglourious Basterds* premiered in 2009, in other words, Roth's reenactment short—edited into *Inglourious Basterds*—did that too. This premiere was motivated cinematographically by the on-screen one of 1944, when Shosanna's reel, made by Tarantino and in its turn edited into *Nation's Pride*, modified the dangerous intruder and the history it was claiming to repeat, turning the premiere of Nazi propaganda's (likely inaccurate) reenactment into its own present. The on-screen battle between different versions of history causes a fiery apocalypse that recalls the firestorms represented in anti-Nazi works, for example in Vicki Baum's novel *Hotel Berlin '43* (1944) and its cinema adaptation of 1945. Considering that *Inglourious Basterds* first opened in France (albeit not in Paris but in Cannes) and that the film was made in Berlin and shot also elsewhere in Germany, the geographic conditions of its actual world premiere reverberate with the echoes of *Nation's Pride* fictional one. And even if the Cannes audience was not threatened by weapons and firestorms, the historical twist it was shown on screen caused shock and surprise.

Consequently, although Tarantino knew that he could expect affordable production costs and excellent craftsmanship at the Babelsberg AG, he likely did not choose the studios for their economic and technical assets alone, or he could have also shot his film in other German studios. Instead, he opted to work in Babelsberg precisely because this was the most iconic location of both Weimar and Nazi cinema and thus a crucial location for *Inglourious Basterds*' transnational juggling of history.[71] As Tarantino declared, "the tradition of Babelsberg is amazing. I'm a film expert, I'm a film scholar, so to be in a film studio where all the great films of the 1920s were made, which is a time I consider to be one of the highpoints of cinema history . . . it's just magnificent!"[72]

Inglourious Basterds does not reenact World War Two cinema history only on the screen. The film's production at the Babelsberg AG can also be read as a deliberate *physical and material* occupation of the studios to symbolically destroy their Nazi associations, reconnect with their "golden" Weimar age, and rehabilitate their disavowed, especially Jewish members (Lang among them).[73] The reenactment dimensions of this production are key for such a reading, and are another indi-

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cation of the transnationalism of the historical reception that governs *Inglourious Basterds*. First of all, Tarantino worked with a multinational, multilingual cast and crew, many of whom had to travel internationally to be part of the production. Moreover, as production designer David Wasco noted, Tarantino requested that most shooting locations be built as sets in the Babelsberg studios, recalling the classical Hollywood production style and matching it with historical direction techniques.[74] As a director, Tarantino did not "let anything pass," as Diane Kruger remembered, and had "no monitor but look[ed] directly into the camera, watching actors directly." Being conducted at eye-line, with commentary and attention, rather than by a distant director behind a control screen, was unusual for Kruger and required getting used to. By contrast, Christoph Waltz was impressed by Tarantino's friendly yet intense scrutiny in conversation, which, to him, seemed a "very old-fashioned, very classical, very personal, amicable" way of communicating between director and actor.[75] These statements illustrate that Tarantino used a hands-on directing method that had been customary for generations of directors before him. While other filmmakers employ this technique today because it offers them a specific assessment of the image, in Tarantino's case its historical dimensions stand out because they correlate with others of his technical and production choices.[76] For instance, he wanted to make a "strictly chemical film" as his cinematographer Robert Richardson recalled. In other words, from the work of all departments to photography and the final print, the film had to be made by "traditional" (analog) means without digital intervention. Richardson noticed that, as a result, "the images were more evenly balanced" than had he shot them anticipating the use of "digital intermediates."[77] Such a relatively even image quality (i.e., more homogeneity of colors and contrast across the reels) is critical for analog film. Moreover, from the scalping scenes to the firestorm at the end, all special effects were performed in their entirety before the running camera, just as in the pre-digital era.

For such directing and cinematography to work, the art department plays a crucial role in setting up the scenes so that they come together with cohesive stylistic and visual integrity. Achieving this goal in *Inglourious Basterds* required careful attention to historical accuracy. Designing the film's look was a daunting task for Wasco, who worked directly with Tarantino and other department heads such as the director of photography and the costume designer. To ensure an authentic cultural representation, as Wasco remembers, a professional researcher collected information about all aspects of French life in the 1940s, from

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the type of movie projectors used then and the architectural technicalities of the era's cinemas to hundreds of movie posters designed especially for *Inglourious Basterds* in the style of the time. The prop master collected information about everything "from food to weapons." The production also found inspiration in a book of rare color photographs from the era that depicted everyday life in France under Nazi occupation, and that Wasco described as the production's "Bible." With the help of such means, period accuracy was ensured in every detail, from the military uniforms to all settings and material objects that would appear in the shots.[78] To leave his own humorous mark, Tarantino added occasional incongruities. One of these is the "Winnetou greeting" performed by a German soldier in a scene depicting a forehead detective game that the occupiers play in a French underground bar. After guessing correctly that his character is the Mescalero Apache Winnetou, the most famous character of Karl May's (1842–1912) nineteenth-century Wild West novels and one of the most cherished figures of the German popular imagination to this day, the German soldier stands up and performs this greeting by touching his heart with the right hand and extending the arm in a circular horizontal movement that recalls a blessing. The gesture is anachronistic because it became famous only after World War Two through the so-called "Winnetou films," West German screen adaptations of May's most popular novels made in the 1960s, and by festivals that have dramatized these novels on outdoor stages since the late 1940s.[79]

Additionally, the physical experiences made in accurately reconstructed historical settings are crucial for reenactments. Among them are ordinary sensory activities (such as the actors drinking milk, eating strudel and cream, and smoking in *Inglourious Basterds*) and performances of death and injury. In battle reconstructions, for example, participants often sport grotesque wounds, play dead, and use fake blood. Without entering the extensive debate about Tarantino's representations of violence, I will only note that a large part of *Inglourious Basterds'* bloodshed is exaggerated in the operatic fashion that the director is known for—a representation style that matches how reenactments might depict violence. But Tarantino does not exempt his audience from painfully realistic representations either. Intimate scenes such as Landa's strangling von Hammersmark, Aldo deliberately hurting the Nazi star's wounded leg, or the "Bear Jew" beating Sgt. Rachtmann (Richard Sammel) to death, problematize and indict the brutality of the perpetrators even if they are "positive" characters. Scenes such as these raise a different set of questions from those representing blood-

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shed in the exaggerated, playacting style that recalls that of many historical reenactments, but these questions are not under scrutiny here.[80]

Finally, reenactors tend to be non-academic specialists with a deeper knowledge of their era and culture of interest than even some scholars because they are attentive to information that can appear irrelevant from an academic perspective. For instance, they might acquire exhaustive knowledge of every conceivable detail of the material history of a specific age. As a consequence, while reenactors may, for example, consider scholars too disinterested in an era's material conditions, scholars may criticize reenactors for being too interested in material and personal details, and insufficiently analytical.[81] Tarantino can be regarded—and regards himself—a non-academic historian of cinema. The main form in which he expresses his ample knowledge is through his films, which always engage in intertextual and medial explorations of their respective diegetic eras. It therefore makes sense that the director adds some imperfections to the historical worlds he imagines, just as reenactors occasionally do, to play tricks on their audiences and test their historical proficiency.[82] Remarkably, however, *Inglourious Basterds*' major historical "imperfection" far surpasses the historical anachronism of the Winnetou greeting: the obliteration of the Nazi leadership is a blatant twist of history that *emphasizes* historical accuracy *ex negativo* within an otherwise carefully curated production. The film's contemporariness (state-of-the-art photography and post-production) do not conflict with its reenactment valences, given that such performances may incorporate modernized or current components. Whether or not Tarantino and his international crew were aware that some of what they were doing coincided with historical reenactments, their narrative, geographic, cinematographic, and material choices and production techniques echoed this performative mode of historical reception.[83]

Conclusion

The desire to destroy Hitler and his Nazi acolytes is a recurring theme in wartime propaganda films, and one usually connected to the theme of transnational movement. Iconic for such works, *Man Hunt* expresses this desire by inviting associations between Thorndike's aiming his rifle at Hitler with the camera as "product and extension" of the imaginary gun in an act that triggers the movement motivating the film's narrative.[84] In *Inglourious Basterds*, the sniper Zoller and Landa are in possession of the Nazi propaganda's guns and violence, and von Eich-

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berg and Goebbels in that of its camera. Yet Shosanna successfully turns the cinema apparatus into a weapon against the Nazis and their propaganda, just as the Basterds' guerilla methods turn Nazi violence against the perpetrators. In both films, none of this would happen without extensive international mobility and multilingualism at the plot level. And if propaganda is considered in Vicki Baum's ironic words as political regimes "making faces at each other,"[85] then Shosanna's and Zoller's facial close-ups that Shosanna edits together into *Nation's Pride*, not only "make faces at each other," but are clenched, on screen, in the warring propagandas' cinematographic battle. If the narrative aim of *Inglourious Basterds* is to wipe out the Nazis and their cinema, this elision is not only narrated, enacted, and implemented by directing and editing choices within the cinematographic medium, but also performed at the material, production level where it requires the mobility of directors, producers, actors, and film crews. By requiring and representing transatlantic movement, Tarantino's film reconnects with Weimar and anti-Nazi cinema history best epitomized by Lang (who links both, not least in terms of mobility) and reinscribes this history into current global cinema.

As this chapter has shown, then, by its intertextual allusions and cinematographic affinities with anti-Nazi films from the 1940s, for which *Man Hunt* serves as an iconic example, *Inglourious Basterds* performs a retrospective "occupation" and "recapturing" of "good" German cinema on its own turf by its production location and transnational context, a context that it shares with wartime anti-Nazi films. In this way, Tarantino's film achieves two goals: it illustrates a particular case of transnational cinematographic reception, and it inserts itself narratively, materially, and performatively in the history of the Babelsberg studios and thus of German cinema. The film's transatlantic production at this charged site embraces this history's "good fathers" (Weimar and anti-Nazi film epitomized by Lang) and disavows the "bad" ones (Nazi film represented by Goebbels and von Eichberg), while *Inglourious Basterds'* worldwide success integrates this "occupation" into the long-lasting relationship between US and German popular cultures, and into the global one.

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Notes

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1. Crowther, "*Man Hunt*."
2. The novel's title unequivocally genders the protagonist.
3. Halle, *German Film after Germany*, 97. Although Halle means productions made after 1990, I count the historical anti-Nazi films among war films too.
4. The studios have often changed their names throughout their history. This chapter uses "Babelsberg studios" to refer to them in general and their era-specific names whenever needed.
5. Schofield, "Theater without Borders?"
6. Heiduschke, "Co-Producing World Cinema," 149.
7. In this chapter, the word "transnational" and its derivatives refer to the multidirectional relations between Germany and the United States. I vary them occasionally with "international" as a broader term that extends beyond this national dichotomy.
8. Exceptions are Bildhauer, "Visuality, Violence, and the Return of the Middle Ages"; and Weber, "From Glorious Nibelungs to *Inglourious Basterds*."
9. On *Inglourious Basterds'* racial politics, see Nama, *Race on the QT.* Nama notes that Shosanna's loving relationship with Marcel allies her with "blackness, a marginalized presence and discredited identity in the film" (ibid., 98). Inversely, Marcel allies himself both deliberately and unknowingly with Jewish characters (Shosanna and some of the Basterds) and characters with Native American connotations (Aldo), and through these alliances becomes central to bringing down the Nazi regime.
10. In both films, mobility is occasionally impeded by blockage, a theme I cannot discuss extensively here. Blockage occurs in scenes where characters are trapped seemingly without escape, such as Thorndike being captured and held as a Nazi prisoner or trapped in a cave whose only exit is guarded by Quive-Smith in *Man Hunt*; Shosanna's family being trapped under the floorboards of a French farm where they sought refuge and the shootout in a French underground bar in *Inglourious Basterds*. Blockage is, of course, also a major factor in the demise of the Nazi *haute-volée* trapped in the burning cinema.
11. Historically, the island had been used as a destination for Nazi submarines until 1944, when the plot of *Inglourious Basterds* ends.
12. The name alludes to the French soft porn *Emmanuelle* films of the seventies and eighties, and to American actress Yvette Mimieux, best known in the sixties and seventies.

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By choosing it, Shosanna is likely mocking the image men have of her as a French sex object.

13. Landa identifies Hammersmark as an enemy agent by a lost shoe. As several *Inglourious Basterds* fan sites and online articles note, this subplot recalls the Cinderella fairy tale, only in this case the recognition of the "princess" is not followed by romance but by her brutal killing.
14. Tarantino, "Quentin Tarantino: The *Inglourious Basterds*," interview by Ella Taylor," 155.
15. Besides the thematic parallels discussed in this section, *Inglourious Basterds* contains several other character types and themes familiar from wartime anti-Nazi cinema, from the Nazi star allied with anti-Nazi fighters, international disguises, and glamorous Nazi soirées in ornate buildings, to fiery conflagrations and even wrong finger gestures. See, for example, Household's novel *Rogue Male* (1939), Vicki Baum's novel *Hotel Berlin '43* (1944), and the latter's eponymous screen adaptation directed by Peter Godfrey (1945).
16. In *Man Hunt*, the location alludes to Hitler's residence near Berchtesgaden; the screenplay of *Inglourious Basterds* also references "Bavaria Berchtesgaden (Hitler's private lair)." Tarantino, *Inglourious Basterds. A Screenplay*, 21. However, this location is not mentioned explicitly in either film.
17. Compare this statement to how German soldier lore (recounted by Hitler) describes the Basterds: "They seem able to elude capture like an apparition [*Gespenst*, addition mine]. They seem to be able to appear and disappear at will." Both films, in other words, emphasize the anti-Nazi fighters' superior evasion skills.
18. All dialogue transcriptions are mine.
19. Household, *Rogue Male*, 131.
20. Rats are a common trope in World War Two propaganda. In *Rogue Male*, the protagonist spends time in a barn overrun by rats where he begins "to think like an animal" (Household, *Rogue Male*, 126), symbolizing Europe's infiltration by the Nazis. Fritz Hippler's infamous film *Der ewige Jude* [The wandering Jew] (1940) uses the same motif for antisemitic propaganda. Landa's remarks echo both uses of the trope.
21. The scene's use of English is logically inconsistent, however. Later, in Paris, Shosanna speaks English perfectly fine. The possibility that at least she—or worse, her whole family—understood what Landa was saying, throws their execution into an even more brutal light: they would have realized what was happening, but their immobilized position was forcing them to wait for their death knowing that they had no chance to survive. In these conditions, Shosanna's escape is ambiguous: only at first sight, it appears that she can run away because Landa's gun misfires. For an interpretation of this moment, see Woisnitza, "Messing Up World War II-Exploitation."
22. This reading applies only to the English version of *Inglourious Basterds*. The implications of this scene are different for foreign versions where English is subtitled but German or French are not.
23. Willis, "'Fire!' in a Crowded Theater," 168.
24. Horak, *Fluchtpunkt Hollywood*. It is one of the cruel ironies of Hollywood during this period that actors who had fled from Nazi persecution were often hired to embody their persecutors.
25. See Aurich, Jacobsen, and Schnauber, *Fritz Lang*, 328.
26. Horak, *Fluchtpunkt Hollywood*, 32.
27. For Hollywood's vacillating approach to foreign accents and languages during the war and after, see ibid.

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28. Tarantino, “Quentin Tarantino: The *Inglourious Basterds*,” interview by Ella Taylor, 155.
29. Tarantino, “Quentin Tarantino: The *Inglourious Basterds*,” interview by Kam Williams, 147.
30. Tarantino, “Quentin Tarantino: The *Inglourious Basterds*,” interview by Ella Taylor, 154.
31. Ibid., 155.
32. Tarantino, “The Making of *Nation's Pride*.”
33. Roth's casting as both a Nazi director and a Basterd raises interesting questions for the identities of these characters that I cannot pursue in this chapter.
34. In line with his authoritative ‘auteur’ airs, von Eichberg suddenly yells “Quiet!” at someone off screen, belying his laconic persona and ending the interview.
35. “Fritz Lang Interviewed by William Friedkin (1975).”
36. Another allusion to Lang might be implied in *Inglourious Basterds*' references to David O. Selznick and Louis B. Mayer during the scene of Hicox's briefing by General Fenech (Mike Myers) and Winston Churchill (Rod Taylor): Selznick was Mayer's son-in-law, met Lang in Paris, and offered him his first Hollywood contract, with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM). Lang later moved to Twentieth Century-Fox. See Aurich, Jacobsen, and Schnauber, *Fritz Lang*, 239.
37. Halle, *German Film after Germany*, 96–101.
38. Household, *Rogue Male*, 8, 34.
39. In Household's novel, Quive-Smith's suspiciousness and treachery are enhanced by his British mixed-ethnic background. Although this association speaks to the author's questionable racial views, this character's *political* orientation is plausible historically: English Nazi supporters were not unusual during the war. The British Free Corps, for instance, was a Waffen-SS unit.
40. Halle, *German Film after Germany*, 87.
41. Paul Andor (Wolfgang Zilzer) cited in Aurich, Jacobsen, and Schnauber, *Fritz Lang*, 332.
42. See AFI, “*Man Hunt* (1941).”
43. Lev, *Twentieth Century-Fox*, 72.
44. Halle, *German Film after Germany*, 99 (Halle's italics).
45. Ibid., 105.
46. Intradiegetic imaginary narratives about the war being lost or won by the Nazis depending on the narrator's wishes can be counted as a specific form of alternative histories, even if they do not change the actual outcome of the war. Examples are *Jakob der Lügner* (Jakob the Liar, 1975) and *Jakob the Liar* (1999), both based on Jurek Becker's eponymous novel published in 1969; *Die Entdeckung der Currywurst* (The Invention of Curried Sausage, 2008) based on Uwe Timm's eponymous novel of 1993; and *Jojo Rabbit* (2019) based on Christine Leunen's novel *Caging Skies* (2019).
47. Heiduschke, “Co-Producing World Cinema,” 149.
48. See Saunders, *Hollywood in Berlin*, 196–201.
49. For German cinema's historical relations with US and other international film industries, see, for instance, Elsaesser, *A Second Life*; Kreimeier, *Die UFA-Story*; Saunders, *Hollywood in Berlin*; ASC Staff, “German Cinema Comes to Hollywood;” Heiduschke, “Co-Producing World Cinema;” Halle, *German Film after Germany*.
50. For scholarship on the international networks of Nazi cinema, see Vande Winkel and Welch, *Cinema and the Swastika*.
51. On the recourse of Nazi film to Hollywood cinema, see, for example, Rentschler, *Ministry of Illusion*, especially 103–12. Tarantino is familiar with these entertaining “Nazi films” (“Pulp and Circumstance,” 168).

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52. Smedley, "Fritz Lang Outfoxed," 296.
53. Ibid., 298–302.
54. Ibid., 297.
55. Koepnick, "Not the End," 428.
56. Ibid., 427.
57. Lev, *Twentieth Century-Fox*, 44.
58. Ibid, 71.
59. It is known that Lang was in the focus of the FBI for most of his American stay, not least for cooperating with and being supportive of left-wing exiles like Bertolt Brecht. See Aurich, Jacobsen, and Schnauber, *Fritz Lang*.
60. See Meza, "Fund Gives to Tarantino's *Basterds*."
61. Heiduschke, "Co-Producing World Cinema," 134.
62. Ibid., 146–47.
63. Wedel, "Studio Babelsberg Today (1993–2012)," 42–43.
64. Ibid., 43.
65. Agnew, Lamb, and Tomann, "What Is Reenactment Studies?" 2–3.
66. See, for instance, the media debate surrounding the merits and challenges of historical representation of racial relations in Netflix's Regency-era *Bridgerton* show (2020, 2022).
67. Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 62.
68. Tarantino's inscription even happened at the literal level: the studios, whose streets bear the names of great directors, now also have a Quentin-Tarantino-Straße.
69. Lang's *Metropolis* is crucial for the Babelsberg AG's contemporary self-definition. The film was not only an aesthetic reference point after the studios had reinvented themselves under Volker Schlöndorff's leadership in 1991, but *Metropolis*' female robot also serves as their current mascot. See Wedel, "Studio Babelsberg Today (1993–2012)," 70–71.
70. Tarantino, "Pulp and Circumstance," 171.
71. Tarantino is not only familiar with Nazi cinema but with Goebbels's speeches and Riefenstahl's memoirs too. See Oehmke and Wolff, "Meine eigene Welt." See also Tarantino, "Pulp and Circumstance," 168.
72. Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen "Konrad Wolf," Filmmuseum Potsdam, *100 Years Studio Babelsberg*, 4.
73. For a detailed analysis of this "rehabilitation" on a cinematographic and ideological level, see Weber, "From Glorious Nibelungs to *Inglourious Basterds*."
74. Email communication, 23 June 2020.
75. All statements in this passage are from "Quentin Tarantino on *Inglourious Basterds*. Film 4 Interview Special."
76. Film professor Dr. Andrew Syder from the College of Motion Pictures Arts at Florida State University helped me to clarify this point. Email, 6 January 2022.
77. See "Robert Richardson ASC on *Inglourious Basterds*: A very Nazi Business." The non-digital goal could not be carried through to the very end, however, and digital intermediates (DIs) were used to adjust the colors and images in post-production.
78. All production information in this paragraph is from David Wasco, email communication, 23 June 2020. The referenced "Bible" is Baronnet, *Les Parisiens sous L'Occupation*.
79. On the history and cultural characteristics of these festivals, see Weber, *Blood Brothers and Peace Pipes*. On the festivals' influence on the "Winnetou films," see Weber "Indianerspiel und Performativität bei Karl-May-Spielen."

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80. On the "medieval" features of Tarantino's violence in *Inglourious Basterds*, see Bildhauer, "Visuality, Violence, and the Return of the Middle Ages."
81. See, for instance, Kalshoven, *Crafting "The Indian*," 135; Wilczek, "Volkskultur aus fremder Hand," 87–89.
82. As noted by Wasco.
83. In turn, some historical reenactments might be inspired by cinema, for instance when reenactors use historical films as models. See, for example, Dreschke, "Possession Play"; and Wilczek, "Volkskultur aus fremder Hand."
84. Koepnick, "Not the End," 423.
85. Baum, *Hotel Berlin '43*, 217.

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Chapter 3

From Shakespeare to Goethe

German Golden Age Literature and Silver Screen Literacy in Trans/national Times

Bridget Levine-West

Released in the United States as *Young Goethe in Love*, Phillip Stölzl's *Goethe!* offers viewers a semi-fictionalized account of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in his twenties by intertwining biographical events with scenarios mined from his *Sturm und Drang* output, particularly *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (The Sorrows of Young Werther).[1] Playfully entitled *Goethe!* in German, this biopic/adaptation appears to represent yet another Hollywood-inspired, escapist, and ostensibly apolitical German entertainment film. Upon the film's release in 2010, critics singled it out as flawed for focusing too much on the intensity of a tragic love story set against picturesque eighteenth-century landscapes with insufficient attention to historical accuracy. Writing for *Der Tagesspiegel*, Jan Schulz-Ojala characterized the director's approach this way:

> For as lovingly as Stölzl and his production team depicted—albeit digitally—the court in Wetzlar, Lotte's Wahlheim, and Goethe's Frankfurt, he was equally cavalier in how he dealt with history . . . For Stölzl it's not so much about unavoidably subjective coloring that would crop up even with the most scrupulous treatment of the source material, rather about indulging in a somewhat coarse approach and in cinematic clichés.[2]

Notably tongue-in-cheek, Schulz-Ojala locates the film's sole saving grace in its ability to enthrall school students whose teachers take them to the film in the (in his view mistaken) hope of fleshing out the lived experiences of the poet. "But it doesn't matter," he writes, "if German school classes storm the movie theaters en masse in order to grab hold

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of the true, rakish, handsome Goethe; at least the theater owners will be overjoyed."[3]

If understood as box-office fare meant to entertain at the expense of edification, *Goethe!* would neatly join the ranks of a cadre of German films created during a period of post-Wall "cinematic normalization."[4] This trend, first labeled by Eric Rentschler as a move toward a "cinema of consensus"[5] and seen in its later manifestations as a strategic "transnational turn" per Randall Halle's analysis, results in films that ostensibly diminish their factual and historical contexts and instead emphasize melodramatic plots to captivate heterogeneous audiences around the world lacking a shared collective memory.[6] As Halle explains, this recalibration of filmmaking practices for global circulation entails the loss of the national pedagogical agendas that had shaped earlier German film productions. Whereas pedagogical concerns had been reflected in and were constitutive of films like Wolfgang Staudte's *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (The Murderers are Among Us, 1946) and Fassbinder's *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (The Marriage of Maria Braun, 1979), which criticized Germany's engagement in World War Two, as well as Fassbinder's *Fontane Effi Briest* (1974) and Egon Günther's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (The Sorrows of Young Werther, 1976), which condemned the overly rigid social conditions that led to the death of their films' protagonists, Halle sees in the post-national period the stark absence of these influences and elements, precisely those that Schulz-Ojala bemoans as lacking in *Goethe!*[7] Halle instead locates nation-state projects of education, which continue with or without indexical filmic representation, as relegated to venues separate from, and only ancillary to, the film product itself. He points here to government agencies and media conglomerates who step in post-production and retool these popular products for the edification of national audience members via *Filmhefte* (film booklets), providing background information, ready-made lesson plans, and classroom activities that support the teaching of contemporary films.

The linear progression implied by Halle, in which films are first produced for transnational entertainment purposes and later become reworked to address national pedagogical concerns, as well as the dichotomy between the descriptors "entertaining" and "educational" advanced by critics and scholars alike, deserve reconsideration given a more pervasive pedagogical mission undergirding recent adaptations of Golden Age German texts in films such as *Goethe!*[8] While we can trace the origins of this "Goethe boom" back to a global trend that had picked up speed roughly a decade earlier in Britain and the United States,[9] these adaptations of German literary works were created, at

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least in part, in relation to a robust pedagogical agenda advanced by the German federal government. Put another way, while media literacy education initiatives in Germany certainly do affect the post-production dissemination and reception of some films, they also provide social and economic impetuses for the films' creation, and often inform their look and mission. In the German film context, education and entertainment are intriguingly interconnected components. These intertwined components are interesting because, as I unpack here, they represent a poignant focal point for insights into contemporary German culture as it negotiates the transnational turn; they also offer implications for research into heritage film productions globally.

To shed light on this phenomenon, I open with an analysis of government-driven media literacy incentives in twenty-first-century Germany. While the incentives affect *German* film productions and co-productions, I situate these developments within the broader framework of a transnational trend: namely, the active collaboration between European national governments and film industry professionals to bolster film literacy among the school-age demographic. I demonstrate how these initiatives implicitly, at least in the context studied here, spur the inclusion of adaptations in educational contexts,[10] and then shift the focus to two case studies from what I elsewhere have labeled the "Goethe boom" trend:[11] Leander Haußmann's *Kabale und Liebe* (Intrigue and Love, 2005), based on Schiller's eponymous play, and Stölzl's *Goethe!* I situate the production of these films at a three-way nexus of commercial trends, media literacy discourses, and anxieties about the legacy of national products in transnational times. Close readings of the films and their *Filmhefte* reveal the imagined ideal viewer(s) of the works, the value systems that the films support, and the promotion of media literacy skills with which they are tasked. What emerges through these examples is a self-reflexive stance that Goethe boom films take toward adaptation, which not only channels national discourse on film literacy but in turn promotes adaptation as a skill, even if the situational constraints of *Filmbildung* (film education) praxis prevent the educational materials for these films from wholly tapping into their progressive potential.

Filmbildung and the Worldwide Shakespeare Boom

During the 1990s and early 2000s, British heritage film productions and Hollywood adaptations of Shakespeare created an international splash.

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As a result, modernizations of Anglo-American canonical texts, most especially works by Shakespeare, began popping up worldwide. For instance, localized emulations of this trend emerged in Mexico (Fernando Sariñana's *Amar te Duele*, 2002), Korea (Won-guk Lim's *Nalnari jongbujeon*, 2008), Brazil (Bruno Barreto's *O Casamento de Romeu e Julieta*, 2005), and Italy (Volfango de Biasi's *Iago*, 2009), with directors adapting and/or modernizing Shakespeare's plays in line with their own national audiences' tastes, customs, cultures, and languages. Yet in Germany, the foreign market where the Shakespeare boom films were most well-received (as measured by ticket sales, film profits, and number of continued or repeated showings), the hype surrounding the Hollywood films sparked a noticeably different trend. Working in the land that had long ago laid claim to the English bard,[12] German directors instead turned their efforts to creating adaptations and modernizations of their country's own canonical literary works, dismayed that, while modernizations of German plays succeeded on the German stage, these same works rarely received treatment in German post-Wall cinema.[13] The resulting group of films ranges from studio films to independent productions, including works such as Uwe Janson's *Werther* (2005), Rolf Teigler's *Penthesilea Moabit* (2008), Sebastian Schipper's *Mitte Ende August* (Sometime in August, 2009), and Dominik Graf's *Die geliebten Schwestern* (Beloved Sisters, 2014).

That a film trend largely centering on Shakespeare (and other iconic writers) in the 1990s resulted in German canonical literature appearing on the silver screen in the early 2000s to some extent parallels the type of productive appropriation of Shakespeare undertaken during the *Sturm und Drang*, when writers in German-speaking principalities engaged with Shakespeare's output in a similar way. With the aim of creating national-theater productions that could vie with those of other countries, authors such as Bodmer, Wieland, Lessing, Lenz, and, of course, Goethe identified Shakespearean *emulation*, as opposed to the translation or mere imitation of his works, as a means of bringing stories of assumed German origin to the stage. The result of this decades-long undertaking spurred the creation of numerous original works that channeled a certain Shakespearean spirit but were distinctly "German" in nature. In short, the very works that were revisited for the twenty-first century originally emerged because of creative Shakespeare appropriation in the eighteenth century.

Although German directors' engagement with the Shakespeare boom follows an intriguing cultural precedent in the German-speaking context, several political and industrial factors coincided to make

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the recirculation of Golden Age works highly attractive at this time. Specifically, the release of the Shakespeare boom films occurred as the German government was increasing its support for film production, with a particular emphasis being given to enhancing school students' media literacies through film study. The interventions and initiatives detailed below, themselves a local manifestation of a global phenomenon, shed light on how German educational concerns and, eventually, policies led to a nationalization—rather than a mere localization or emulation—of Shakespeare boom film strategies and aesthetics.

To put this development into a historical and global context, we must look back to 1998, a year when several seemingly separate issues converged, leading to the production of the films in focus in this chapter. First, in January of that year, the British Film Policy Review Group, commissioned by Britain's secretary of state for media, culture and sport, proposed that the state engage in a media literacy project with the British film industry in order to "boost film education" in schools.[14] Second, in October, Germany's chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, established the position of *Beauftragte für Kultur und Medien* (Federal government commissioner for culture and media, BKM), centralizing tasks that until then had—unlike in Britain under the aforementioned secretary of state—occurred disparately across Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development, and Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Third, in early December, Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* was released in the United States; some months later, it opened worldwide, receiving great acclaim, including in Germany in particular. While these three events occurred in geographically different locales, together they create an intriguing backdrop for understanding how, when, and why German directors started to create films foregrounding Germany's literary heritage.

By establishing the position of BKM, Schröder put Germany on a course of updating and aligning national media policy activities with practices already established elsewhere in Europe. Just as the aim of the recommendations put forth by Britain's Film Policy Review Group in January 1998 was to "build the infrastructure of a self-sustaining, commercial film industry . . . [that will] lay the foundations of a healthy and diverse film culture, allowing a wide range of film-making, from the shoestring budget to the blockbuster, to flourish throughout the UK,"[15] so too was Schröder's establishment of the BKM later that same year, which itself was prompted by a range of economic and pro-film-industry incentives that he hoped would positively influence the Ger-

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man cultural landscape. He presented the move as a way to make cultural policy a central task of European domestic policy,[16] a prioritization of cultural production that was immediately reflected in an increase in federal funding for artistic production,[17] with a sizable portion specifically earmarked for German filmmaking.[18] While financial assistance offset production and distribution costs, within a few short years the BKM had increased the government's reach of their media policies, expanding their work into the arena of reception by targeting the school-aged demographic.

To accomplish their goal of integrating film literacy into the national school curriculum, the BKM created several initiatives and hosted a number of key events between 2001 and 2003. As detailed below, the BKM's work ranged from the creation and online distribution of individual *Filmhefte* aimed at assisting teachers with the integration of film into school curricula to the establishment of a central organization tasked with overseeing and managing film education events across the country; intriguingly, many of these strategic moves closely followed British precedents.

To outline several aspects of this project, in 2001, BKM Julian Nida-Rümelin presented a five-point film policy plan with the aim of enhancing German cinema's position as a cultural asset.[19] A new BKM was then appointed to spearhead this mission: Christina Weiss,[20] a specialist in childhood visual processing. Supporting their identification of school students as a target demographic, she and her office claimed that young people suffered from a *Filmleseschwäche* (weakness in the ability to interpret film),[21] a result of a national approach to media literacy which, she claimed, lagged behind that in other European countries.[22] For instance, an ambiguous policy in 1994 had resulted in teachers deciding independently whether or not to incorporate film into their curricula, with those teachers who wanted to engage their students with film finding little access to formal training to support them in the endeavor.[23] To address these deficits, Weiss developed a framework to support *Filmbildung* nationwide, declaring the skill of understanding the history and grammar of film essential "for the preservation of basic democratic values and the strengthening of one's own opinion."[24] Weiss thereby outlined the highest of stakes in cultivating media literacy in the German educational system.

By 2002, a branch within the Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, bpb) was established for the purpose of bolstering *Filmarbeit* [film literacy] across the country. In March 2003, the first "Kino macht Schule" [Cinema goes to school] con-

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vention took place, sponsored by the bpb and the German Federal Film Board (Filmförderungsanstalt, FFA), bringing together 320 participants and 30 experts across all levels of the film industry, as well as those in politics, education, and the university academic community.[25] The immediate outcome of this multi-day event was threefold. First, a mandate was released requesting film competence be fostered in primary and secondary schools throughout Germany, and that instructors at all levels receive training in media analysis. Second, an annual *Schulfilmwoche* (school film week) was inaugurated, to be financially supported by the bpb, the FFA, private film distributors, and all sixteen German federal states, extending the reach of an independent pilot project that had been undertaken, successfully, in Cologne a year prior.[26] Finally, a "film canon" was created, consisting of thirty-five works chosen from roughly a hundred years of film history by a committee of filmmakers, film historians, film critics, and film pedagogues.[27] The explicit aims of creating this canon were, as articulated by the bpb: (a) to preserve and make widely accessible the cultural heritage of film history, thereby paralleling the work that libraries undertake for the preservation and dissemination of written works, and museums for that of the visual arts; (b) to raise awareness among instructors of films worthy of integration into curricular subjects; and (c) to help students develop a historical understanding of the film medium.[28] As a final step in the "film canon" project, the bpb created a *Filmheft* that didacticized each film for instruction in the classroom, thereby setting a precedent that continues today upon the release of films deemed important for study.

Given the success of these initiatives, the non-profit agency Vision Kino was founded in 2005 to oversee film education initiatives and programs, and to bring together individuals working in cinema operations with German media pedagogues, other members across the film industry, and educators. Starting in that year, Vision Kino took over the production of film education instructional materials, and, in collaboration with bpb, relaunched the film pedagogy portal kinofenster.de, which increased accessibility to and the diversity of the many *Filmarbeit* materials available.[29]

Considered together, the approach taken by German government in the name of national film literacy mirrors much of that undertaken in Britain; for example, in Germany's nationwide *Schulfilmwoche* we see the same type of upsizing and federalizing of an existing media literacy program that, in the UK resulted in the "Into Film Festival."[30] And, with the establishment of Vision Kino as an organization that would streamline film education work and create a plethora of teaching ma-

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terials housed online, we find a parallel to the British Film Institute's educational charity Into Film. Finally, even the approach taken to the didacticization of films undertaken by the bpb and Vision Kino reflect, in structure and objectives, materials created in and for UK schools.[31] Thus, while the start of Germany's media literacy enterprises can be traced back to the inaugural "Kino macht Schule" convention in Berlin in 2003, many developments, both preceding and following this event, inform the film education landscape during the very period when directors in the UK, the US, and later Germany were producing adaptations of canonical texts.

The chronology outlining German film education activities provided above is neither comprehensive nor inclusive of the most recent developments in film education.[32] Nevertheless, it is important to note that despite the numerous directions film education work has taken over the past two decades, there has long been, and continues to be, a prioritization of literary adaptations within *Filmbildung*. At the inaugural "Kino macht Schule" convention, the bpb reported on how schools across the sixteen German federal states had been integrating films into the curriculum to date, noting that the four states that already incorporated film somewhat systematically did so explicitly through adaptations.[33] The report further specifies that in eleven of the twelve states that dealt with film less systematically,[34] *Filmbildung* occurred in the classical media-pedagogical subjects: German, art, foreign languages, and music.[35] Given the emphasis on literature in two of the four named subject areas, the implication is that, also here, adaptations constituted a large share of the instructed films.

Adaptations continue to play a central role in film education today, a phenomenon that is not necessarily an intended outcome of the push for increased film literacy, but a by-product of the way *Filmbildung* is systematized within Germany specifically. As Petra Rockenfeller, chairperson of the advisory board for Vision Kino, lamented at 2021's "Kino macht Schule," film still takes a back seat in German educational contexts, with the medium used to bolster "traditional" school subjects. Rockenfeller argued that "while countries such as France, Sweden, and the UK have already established film as a school subject . . . even in 2021 film in German schools has a niche existence."[36] Instead, "film is currently used as a means of analysis or illustration in art and German language and literature, or in other subjects such as history,"[37] meaning that "film as a unique seventh art form, with all its many facets, is absent both from instruction as well as from teacher education, which transnationally should in fact include dedicated education in the areas

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of film and media."[38] From Rockenfeller's reflections we recognize that, given the ways in which film has been integrated into the curriculum, adaptations will continue to be a popular genre in schools, at least until the medium attains a status as a curricular subject of its own, as teachers face pressure to "fit" film into these other subjects. As *Die Welt* reporter Thomas Vitzthum maintains in an article entitled, "College-bound students hardly ever read Goethe or Schiller," teachers working in the German school system in the 2000s did welcome the flexibility to work with film adaptations.[39] He quotes Beate Kennedy, chairperson of the Fachverbands Deutsch im Germanistenverband, writing:

> The teacher from Schleswig-Holstein [Beate Kennedy] does not even consider complaining let alone bemoaning this development. She acquiesces to it and considers how the works might be integrated into her teaching better than through conventional lessons. [Kennedy reports that she has] "had very positive experiences with the engagement of multimedia." In this way, new films based on old books, documentaries, eyewitness accounts, a visit to a museum, and many other things, can be made more palatable.[40]

Additional factors that Vitzhum outlines as making adaptations appealing in recent years include the loosening of government-mandated reading lists for the *Abitur* (secondary school comprehensive graduation exam) and the shortened amount of time students spend in the *Gymnasium* in the early 2000s as a result of a G8 reform. To this we might add a general pushback against conservative understandings of literary canons in recent years. A key compounding factor, however, is not mentioned by Vitzthum, namely, *Filmbildung*, which reinforces the teaching of adaptations made with this demographic in mind.

Put another way, if film directors, production companies, and distributors had somehow not been aware of the richness of Germany's school-age market for film adaptations going into the inaugural "Kino macht Schule" convention—from the report detailing the prevalence of adaptations in instructional settings, to the unveiling of numerous initiatives that would further support productions in this genre, and plenty of examples between Hollywood and Britain of successful films in this genre—by the end of the convention they were certainly assured of a market moving forward.

It is unsurprising, then, that some of the same filmmakers that up until that point had been producing successful adaptations of contemporary literary works, such as Haußmann with *Herr Lehmann* (2003), began turning their attention to canonical literary texts at precisely this

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juncture. Even more telling, directors and distributors were clear about their intentions with these films. Emblazoned across the dust jacket of *Kabale und Liebe*, for instance, is the proclamation, "more easily comprehensible than generations of pupils perhaps remember,"[41] implying that today's young people will be more satisfied with this adaptation than either the literary original or any of the ten previous adaptations of Schiller's work.[42] Similarly, speaking about *Goethe!*, Stölzl proclaims confidence in his film's reception by young viewers, stating, "I believe . . . that through schools the film has the chance to reach a young audience that would otherwise never go to a historical period film."[43]

Since 2005, then, works across German literary history have found a new life on the silver screen as result of these concomitant forces: from Margarete von Trotta's biopic of Hildegard von Bingen (*Vision*, 2010) to Burhan Qurbani's recent reworking of Döblin's masterpiece in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (2020). A closer look at *Kabale und Liebe* and *Goethe!*, members of a distinct subset of these films, illuminates how contemporary canonical adaptations respond to film literacy initiatives by valuing popular culture above and even as predecessors of canonical originals.

Kabale und Liebe: Adapting Media Literacy to and from the Screen

Like many films from this genre, Haußmann's *Kabale und Liebe* was released in response to a commemorative event, namely the 200th anniversary of Schiller's death, and represents the first large-scale attempt in the twenty-first century to adapt an eighteenth-century German text for the screen.[44] With the tagline "*es geht also doch*" (so it works after all), the film's promotional message distanced it from the rather unflattering legacy of arthouse adaptation flops, such as the films of the "adaptation crisis" of the 1970s.[45] To attract audiences, the film was announced as the German manifestation of the successful Hollywood formula for resurrecting literary classics, the DVD cover proclaiming: "Schiller was never this close to Shakespeare—or to Hollywood. *Kabale und Liebe* is Haußmann's answer to *Shakespeare in Love*."[46] The film was groundbreaking: upon Haußmann's receipt of a 2006 DIVA award, the director of ZDF's *Theaterfilm* channel correctly interpreted the recognition as a sign that more contemporary canonical adaptations were on the horizon, proclaiming, "This . . . will inspire the creation of future made-for-television adaptations of classical theater pieces that promise to be successful; there will be a desire for more."[47] Reviews confirmed

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positive reception among school students, labeling it, "the juiciest, most emotional, school-friendly, bourgeois, and light-hearted contribution to the Schiller jubilee."[48] Indeed, the "school-friendly" film targeted this demographic through *Filmhefte* as well as modifications made to its appropriated Shakespeare boom aesthetics reflecting exactly those media literacy aims that films like these are tasked to promote.

Kabale und Liebe takes a distinctly self-reflexive stance as a contemporary canonical adaptation. Across both aural and cinematographic tracks, filmic strategies nullify presumed hierarchies across artistic media, time periods, and cultural spheres. Aurally, Haußmann pairs antiquated dialogue with a modernized soundtrack, not unlike Luhrmann; however, instead of contemporary pop songs, Haußmann's score involves modernized period pieces. In introducing a modernized, electric guitar rendition of the 1807 German *Volkslied* "Kein Feuer, Keine Kohle" as its *Leitmotif*, a song that had been transformed during the *Sturm und Drang* from folklore into *Volkspoesie*, *Kabale und Liebe* flags its program of blurring divisions: between high and popular culture, and between past and present. As a work that already straddled the divide between low and high cultural spheres, and indeed is positioned to do so yet again, its inclusion reflects the film's desire to overlap presumedly disparate cultural spheres and to relativize various persistent hierarchies, including those Rockenfeller bemoaned: the hierarchy in the arts through which media are instrumentalized to relay more traditional subject matter. In addition, by foregrounding a modern-sounding soundtrack, the aural track aligns with the visual spectacle of this made-for-television film, allowing a wider variety of audience members domestically, as well as potentially internationally, to enjoy the work, regardless of familiarity with Schiller's text, *Volkslieder*, or the *Sturm und Drang* epoch.

Beyond aurally and visually modern tracks that appear aimed at making *Kabale und Liebe* accessible to a variety of audiences, the film further agitates against culturally constructed divisions by eschewing viewer immediacy in ways that invert Hollywood aesthetics. Unusual camera angles and zooms replace the medium-length, eye-level shots used in Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), thereby positioning Haußmann's viewer above the unfolding action or outside of rooms within which action occurs. This alteration is most striking in those sequences that otherwise visually quote Luhrmann's film. For example, both investigate their female protagonist's bedroom as the locus of an illicit love affair that dooms the main characters. However, while the props in Luise's boudoir closely mirror those found in Juliet's bedroom, with

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clothes suggestively strewn about the room in juxtaposition with dolls, music boxes, and stuffed animals, *Kabale und Liebe*'s viewers are positioned as investigators of the room, suggesting that they possess an analytical stance that *Romeo + Juliet*'s viewers do not. While Luhrmann frames his investigation of Juliet's bedroom through a shot that places viewers directly across from her bed and, therefore, directly involved in the chaos of the scene, Haußmann's exploration of space occurs through a camera that twists throughout the room, investigating objects from a high angle before zooming in on the bed. In comparison to Luhrmann, Haußmann's cinematographic choices place his audience in a position of greater authority and knowledge, looking down upon and closely inspecting the room (Figure 3.1). The alteration indicates that, in a film otherwise rife with deception, conspiracies, and mistaken identities, the audience will remain "on top of it all," able to interpret events better than the characters themselves. In terms of a connection to the didactic dimension of the film, *Kabale und Liebe*'s cinematography sows the seeds of interpretation that the BKM's media literacy initiatives hope to reap.

Narratively, the film further marks media literacy as essential: plot twists routinely result from main characters' failures in written and visual interpretation. They are duped not only through written materials providing false information (as in Schiller's original drama), but by their own misinterpretations or misunderstanding of visual cues. At one climactic point, Ferdinand mistakes an elderly woman to be his beloved Luise. He confides in her and even proposes before looking more closely and realizing his blunder. The viewer, however, is positioned to register Ferdinand's mistake almost immediately; both Luise and her *Doppelgänger* are revealed in a wide-angle shot that expands the viewer's gaze beyond Ferdinand's limited perception. This sequence, a notable modification of Schiller's drama, highlights the stakes of correctly interpreting visual information. In this way, the film confronts and offers us an alternative way to remedy the purported *Filmleseschwäche* of individuals by having them engage with materials, such as this film, that reveal the pitfalls and promises of visual interpretation.

While *Kabale und Liebe* promotes adaptations as texts well-suited for media literacy development, a close analysis of the *Filmhefte* circulated for the film reveals cultural assumptions and prejudices that work to diminish the "originality" and "worth" of adaptations. The *Filmheft* created by the Sächsische Kinder- und Jugendfilmdienst, e.V., for example, frames *Kabale und Liebe* as a gateway to reading the original text.[49] Activities here position viewers as passive spectators, the film instrumen-

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Figure 3.1. Shots of the protagonist's bedroom in Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* and Haußmann's *Kabale und Liebe*. Screenshots by Bridget Levine-West.

talized to spark their interest in the original author's biography, the historical period, and the main themes of the original text—all topics treated in the booklet. While Schiller and his drama are thus discussed in depth, the film is thematized solely via biographies (of the director and actors) and a one-page interview with lead actress Paula Kalenberg. Tellingly, the interview foregrounds the appreciation Kalenberg herself gained for Schiller while working on the film: although she found his works "rather grim" as a school student, she reports, post-shooting, that she now finds them "particularly intense."[50] Schiller's style, previously "very abstract and distant from daily life" now feels "more familiar" to her.[51] The transformation the interview traces provides an idealization of what students, as imagined in the approach taken in this *Filmheft*, might experience: a greater esteem for Schiller via the vehicle of adaptation.

By contrast, some pedagogical treatments of early Goethe boom films more openly embrace the transmedial practices and transna-

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tional reach of the films. A *Filmheft* released by the film's distribution and production companies invites students to engage critically with Haußmann's *Kabale und Liebe* both in relation to, and separately from, the original text.[52] For example, one activity asks students to write a film review that addresses the strategies implemented by Haußmann to adapt the original text for the screen. Another prompts students to draw connections between this film and other popular films, engaging them more broadly with contemporary adaptations and world cinema. Other tasks position students as active participants in the field of pop culture reworkings in ways that mirror Haußmann's approach in *Kabale und Liebe*; for example, students are prompted to script an alternative ending for the adaptation prior to seeing the film—something Haußmann actually does in the film—and then write a continuation of that story from the first-person perspective of one of the main characters (which Haußmann incidentally also produced in a later-published epistolary novel).[53] In this *Filmheft*, then, both literary adaptation and direct participation in pop culture are positioned as edifying acts that foster students' creativity and, in line with the goals of the BKM, critical media literacies. In summary, while the one *Filmheft* in fact denigrates adaptation culture by structuring activities in ways that perpetuate and reinforce long-standing prejudices against adaptations, the other upholds adaptation as a critical process that can activate students' existing knowledge and literacies, and then enhance their media literacy development. Here, then, we witness a rather ambiguous stance toward the transnational, both as an aesthetic and a filmic practice, that we might understand in relation to the television medium's position at a near crossroad: aware of its national past, becoming more global in scope and tradition, and having a not-yet-fully-known-but-impending future as transnational via streaming platforms. In other words, across the two booklets for teaching *Kabale und Liebe* we see a conservative national stance as well as a more open, global one.

Golden Age Boom: *Goethe!*

Fast-forward five years and, as predicted by Bergmann, several other contemporary adaptations of eighteenth-century German canonical texts circulate, with Stölzl's *Goethe!* emerging as the pinnacle of this trend. Like *Kabale und Liebe*, this film also closely parallels a Shakespeare boom predecessor in content and form, namely Madden's *Shakespeare in Love*.[54] And while reviews attempted to pigeonhole the adaptation

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as a gateway to Goethe's original texts, this film—and similarly *Kabale und Liebe*—takes a more progressive stance regarding its position as an adaptation. Unlike *Kabale und Liebe*, however, the programmatic mission of the film appears to be better apprehended and exploited in its various *Filmhefte*.

After a successful run in Europe, Stölzl's film enjoyed a limited release at art house cinemas in North America. While the film grossed $5.6 million worldwide, reception in the United States was notably underwhelming, with receipts totaling just $162,000.[55] Most US reviews saw the film as Germany's contribution to the transnational biopic/adaptation/costume film trend, a less successful but still charming continuation of films like *Amadeus* (1984), *Shakespeare in Love*, and *Bright Star* (2009). The film was nevertheless deemed valuable, not for its approach to the subject matter or cinematography, but for its potential to encourage viewers to pick up copies of Goethe's original texts. The cinema blog *Film Forward* proclaimed, "It won't match *Amadeus* in popularity, but if this often ridiculous romance gets one viewer to read Goethe, then it will have served its purpose."[56] *The Hollywood Reporter* similarly declared, "*Goethe in Love* falls close enough to [*Shakespeare in Love*] to inspire some guilt in any literature student seduced by its charms."[57] However, while critics in the United States saw little more in the film than an attempt to cash in on a trend, the *Filmhefte* distributed in Germany began to unpack the more nuanced aspects of the film. Across these materials we see reflected the very questioning of the mythos of originality that the Golden Age German writers themselves embody culturally and historically, but that both *Kabale und Liebe* and *Goethe!* subvert.

Like *Kabale und Liebe*, *Goethe!* dismantles dichotomous hierarchies by calling attention to their cultural constructedness, narratively and visually. On the film's narrative track, we see that several quotes and plotlines credited to Goethe, and today emblematic of German high culture, are framed in the film as having themselves been appropriated, adapted, or even stolen by the bard. For example, the film indicates that Werther, the titular character of Goethe's epistolary novel, derives not from the poet's own mind, but from an adjective that Lotte, the female lead, ascribes to the young Johann when she addresses him, repeatedly, as "*mein wert(h)er Herr*" (my esteemed Sir). Similarly, the inclusion of a prosecution scene for Marthe Schwerdtlein, for which Johann prepares the court documents as part of his work in Wetzlar, gestures toward Goethe's adaptation of this individual's story and fate in his later-penned work *Faust*. Moreover, the whole tragedy of *Faust* is

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presented in this film as Goethe's direct co-opting of folk entertainment more broadly. The film identifies the source of Goethe's inspiration for this work not as part of an intellectual exchange with like-minded, well-educated peers,[58] but rather as the result of his experience of street-fair culture, where he, intoxicated, happens upon a marionette production of the medieval legend. The repeated presentation of plot elements and quotations from Goethe's works—seemingly not first invented or penned by the author himself as per the film—dismantles the ostensible mythos of Goethe's originality among viewers, many of whom are intended to enjoy, in these moments, something akin to an "aha" moment, along the lines of "so this is where Goethe got that famous line!" While Crespo Steinke interprets these intertextualities as generic markers that allow the film to address a "double audience,"[59] their integration also works more self-reflexively: through these (fictional) relocations of textual origins, the film presents Goethe as a writer who channels, or even consciously adapts, popular/folk culture. By subverting the assumed pure genius of Goethe in this way, the implication for the media-savvy viewer is that genius may in fact reside in the collective, that artistic works emerge from adaptation and borrowing (or stealing), and that the adaptation can and should stand on at least equal ground with the text that it adapts.

This understanding of "originality" is further underscored by Stölzl's cinematographic choices. Drawing upon strategies employed in *Shakespeare in Love*, *Goethe!* presents mundane, quotidian events in Goethe's life through a flat color palette that represents the lackluster mediocrity that society often assigns to such items and events. Throughout the film, daily exchanges, turmoil, joyous moments, and occasions that (as we are to infer) will later make their appearance in Goethe's creative output are presented through a dull bluish or brownish filter. For example, the soirée in Wetzlar where Johann and Lotte experience their meet-cute is filled with dusty browns; the only notable color in the sequence is the stain from the red wine Lotte spilled on Johann's cravat (Figure 3.2).

This presentation of daily life in the film as somewhat humdrum, even at decisive moments, contrasts with the spectacular visual quality of sequences that show Johann as an artist performing his poetry, such as when he spontaneously bursts out in rhyme with (what the audience recognizes as) the poem "Willkommen und Abschied." Here, increased saturation and a vibrant palette dominate; the camera portrays Johann strolling alongside Lotte across a verdant, grassy field under a bright sky, the crisp navy, yellow, and white of the couple's finery on display.[60]

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Figure 3.2. Contrast between muted and bright palettes in Philip Stölzl's *Goethe!* Screenshots by Bridget Levine-West.

Stölzl's use of such divergent palettes forces the viewer to recognize the separation between quotidian events and moments of creativity as artificially constructed and, relatedly, as itself an artificial cultural construct. Indeed, the entire plot goes to painstaking lengths to indicate that the former always informs and prompts the latter, underscoring how the mundane and the artistic—and by extension the original and the adaptation—should not manifest hierarchically, rather side by side and intertwined.

Appearing several years into the prolific Goethe boom trend, and at a time when *Filmhefte* were more fully established in both public and private spheres, the tension between the original work and its film adaptation, and in turn between the national and the transnational that split the approach taken in the two *Filmhefte* for *Kabale und Liebe* discussed earlier, seems to have been largely resolved in approaches taken to didacticize *Goethe!* With increased acceptance of adaptations as original cultural products, and perhaps also in relation to the film's

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US release as *Young Goethe in Love*, we see a balance struck between prompting students' consideration of the original text and engaging them in analyses of the film's formal elements, either with or without reference to literary predecessors. Several activities prompt comparisons between media or engage students in acts of transmediation themselves, an indication of the cultural value the materials clearly ascribe to the process of adaptation. Additionally, both pedagogical booklets circulated for *Goethe!* (one created by a government entity, the other by a commercial venture, and both distributed via kinofenster.de) invite students to consider the roles letters play in the epistolary novel versus the film, to detail how the film recreates landscape paintings from the *Sturm und Drang* through the mise-en-scène, camera angles, and shots, and to parse similarities and differences between the representation of Goethe as presented across the film and in his literary texts.

Most intriguing for our analysis is how both booklets repeatedly frame national literary and contemporary cultural heritage by contextualizing them in relation to a network of national and transnational products. This occurs through activities such as one in the bpb/Vision Kino booklet that contrasts the film's classical musical score with music used in Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* (2006) and Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*, both of which feature contemporary rock and electronic scores. Another activity encourages students to investigate the presentation of the author as genius in *Goethe!* in relation to its presentation in Jane Campion's *Bright Star*, Milos Forman's *Amadeus*, and John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love*. Finally, across both *Filmhefte*, suggestions for further reading and viewing listed at the end underscore how the viewer is positioned as an active participant in a vast web of intertexts. For instance, the transnational biopics *Pollock* (2000), *Sylvia* (2003), and *Capote* (2005), all co-produced by multiple countries and with a reach that lies far beyond the countries directly involved in their making, stand alongside adaptations of canonical German literature from German film history. Moreover, this network of intertexts is expanded back into the literary realm, through references to works ranging from Homer's *Odyssey* to J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* and Per Nilsson's *So Lonely*, in a move that further breaks down divisions and hierarchies across the arts. As I discuss below, although there are differences between how the bpb/Vision Kino and Warner Bros.' materials engage their student viewers of *Goethe!*, both sets of materials place central emphasis on Goethe, Schiller, their works, and these adaptations of their works, as products that—in their continued circulation and recirculation—transcend and address audiences across geographical spaces, time periods, cultures,

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and media forms. In both, young viewers are positioned as individuals who actively engage with past national products by channeling them through contemporary, international remakes, mash-ups, adaptations, and remixes.

That said, despite the more transnational and film-positive approach both *Filmhefte* take to contextualizing the various source text(s) and prior adaptations of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, they do remain somewhat divided as to the role national literary history can or should play in our era of transnational media exchange. In comparison with the Warner Bros. Germany *Filmheft*, several activities in the bpb/Vision Kino *Filmheft* still direct students' attention back to the original Golden Age German texts. One such task prompts students to research statements made in the eighteenth century regarding gender and class in Germany, and to find how these are expressed in the literary works *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, *Emilia Galotti*, and *Kabale und Liebe*. Additionally, in a move that calls to mind the more conservative *Filmheft* for *Kabale und Liebe*, this booklet includes another interview with the director that explicitly challenges students to turn their attention back to Goethe and his writing. Here, Stölzl is quoted as crediting his successful career trajectory as stage and screen director and filmmaker with his engagement with Goethe's texts during his school years:

> I had a super German teacher. He was a hippie and a fan of Goethe, and he brought Johann Goethe to life in all his genius, his humor, and also his human weaknesses. We then saw *Faust* in the *Kammerspiele* in Munich, with Helmut Griem in the title role. It banged and smoked, and girls in garters rode around on broomsticks—I found it wonderful, and after that wanted to be in the theater.[61]

In contrast to these literature-centric activities and texts, the Warner Bros.' expansive forty-four-page treatment of the film places no expectation on students to engage with Goethe's original texts: each activity is accessible whether they read the originals or not.[62] Rather than gesturing back to the past, activities here prompt discussion outward in the present, toward the cultural status and role of adaptors in contemporary times more generally, with provocative questions such as "Am I also an artist as a remixing DJ, or is the artist only or primarily the composer of the original piece of music?"[63] While the commercial incentives for film companies to highlight their own products in their didactic treatment cannot be denied as one potential reason why the Warner Bros.' *Filmheft* treats the film itself more centrally, it nevertheless remains somewhat ironic that in the name of increasing *film* literacy,

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with all its historical and transnational dimensions, the government-sponsored materials issue treatments of films that frame the reading of canonical texts as essential for success, not just with the booklet's own activities, but, by way of Stölzl's own assertions, possibly also for one's later career. It appears that, for as much as the film industry and the bpb collaborate to promote film literacy in Germany, different priorities influence the shape and scope of the learning objectives.

For the film industry, increasingly marked by transnational means of production, reception, and distribution, these processes and the products associated with the transnational are foregrounded to increase cultural awareness and media literacy, thus supporting a positive reception for the films they make. At the same time, however, for the BKM and the bpb, confronted with an increasingly transnational media sphere, and one often dominated by Anglophone influences (whether by Hollywood or more recently Netflix), their approach tends to foreground German identity, history, and heritage as a means to counter the ever-looming specter of Americanization via the media, which, according to former BKM director Nida-Rümelin (author of the aforementioned five-point film policy from 2001), was beginning to "flatten out" the diversity of European cultural identity in the early 2000s. It was feared that, if left unchecked, such Americanization would lead to the erosion of German cultural identity, particularly among the country's youth—the very same demographic addressed by the *Filmhefte*.[64]

Conclusion

Over the past two decades, *Filmbildung* initiatives have brought works from world cinema into German classrooms in systematic and profound ways. They have done this directly through the promotion of cross-disciplinary discourse among directors, film pedagogues, and secondary-school teachers, as well as through the promotion, creation, and circulation of numerous *Filmhefte* for select films, compiled on the open-source website kinofester.de. And they have done so implicitly by contributing to the contemporary German film-culture landscape that dynamically interweaves entertainment, education, and media literacy.

While the impulses of *Filmbildung* certainly influence how and to what extent contemporary canonical adaptations are ascribed cultural value today, and at times inform how the cultural value of adaptations plays out in the aesthetics of some of the films and their reception, there are additional, concrete ways in which *Filmbildung* participates in sup-

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porting and shaping such works. Alongside the creation of ancillary teaching materials, the bpb offers workshops, teacher education programs, and related events throughout the year, events that do not solely target adaptations but that certainly include them. While these events go beyond the scope of this chapter, the ways in which they inform and interact with the production and reception of film adaptations in the German context points toward an expansion of Simone Murray's conceptualization of the "material adaptation industry."[65] To the six branches she outlines—namely, the author as a transmedial brand; the literary agent and intellectual property rights; book events; the role of literary prizes in the world of film; the screenwriter; and the strategies for marketing adaptations—I propose a seventh: the educational apparatus.

This educational apparatus, made up as it is of participants and stakeholders across the film industry, education sector, and the government, has to date, at least when it comes to adaptations of canonical works, been marked by an enduring and perhaps even healthy ambivalence, but an ambivalence worthy of further scholarly exploration. While this educational apparatus has increasingly addressed and constructed school-age viewers as individuals who today experience national culture(s) and literature(s) through popular, global, and transnational forms, and who must, therefore, learn to navigate an increasingly complex transnational media landscape, the same system has historically diminished some of the profound cultural work that contemporary canonical adaptations perform and would otherwise be poised to contribute to film literacy efforts. Indeed, *Filmhefte* for these works have, over the years, questioned outdated hierarchies of high culture over popular culture, and of the source text over the adapted film; yet they often stop short of upending long-standing and, as I have indicated in this chapter, inaccurate preconceptions facing this genre. With Netflix's global expansion into Europe in 2017, including the company's recent involvement in two feature-length film adaptations from the German literary canon, the US circulation of Qurbani's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (2020) and the production of Edward Berger's *Im Westen nichts Neues* (2022), it remains to be seen how the film and television industries, streaming platforms like Netflix, and the BKM/bpb frame and negotiate the transnational turn in national educational settings. While there is reason to be optimistic with these more recent developments in the European audiovisual sector, given the structures of the very system within which adaptations in Germany are taught and studied, the more progressive notions such films might champion

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will likely continue to be thwarted by overriding prioritization of the national, the ostensible original, and the literary, simply because these works usually point back to, and demand engagement with, literary precursors rather than encouraging students to make connections to other films and/or media forms that often inform the films themselves. When it comes to canonical works, and perhaps especially Golden Age literature, the versions on the silver or digital screen will likely remain subordinate to those literary sources, even in venues intended to foster media literacy. Yet, I hope that the foregoing analysis has uncovered just how unwarranted and even unnecessary that hierarchy is, at a time when transnational media literacies of an informed audience form the perfect nexus for interpreting an adaptation in relation to its various sources across time and space.

A final word about the timeliness of this endeavor: although the Goethe boom film trend in Germany seems to have largely run its course, sociocultural conditions similar to those that supported the emergence of that trend continue to inform German literary adaptations, not least because they serve as vehicles for new insights into social, political, and cultural trends and changes. Ranging from the Black Lives Matter movement to Germany's (and Europe's) ongoing struggle with issues such as gender identity, racism, migration, populism, and political polarization, film adaptations remain an exciting creative arena at the discursive intersection of cinematic art, canonical as well as contemporary literatures, the film industry, and educational institutions. Just as eighteenth-century creative practices and sensibilities breathed new life into contemporary adaptations in the Goethe boom years, German literary adaptations from other eras and genres will continue to peel back layers of past discourses to grant these works new meanings for film audiences in general and school students in particular. How these adaptations will translate and, in turn, themselves contribute to future trends in transnational adaptation practices and media literacy educational measures remains an open question.

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is also co-author of the non-profit introductory/intermediate German textbook *Augenblicke: German through Film, Media, and Texts* (American Association of Teachers of German, 2021).

Notes

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1. The US title plays on John Madden's box-office hit *Shakespeare in Love* (2000), a film that serves as an important intertext for Stölzl's work.
2. Schulz-Ojala, "Bei aller Liebe: *Goethe!*"
3. Ibid.
4. Cooke, "Abnormal Consensus?" 224.
5. Rentschler, "From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus."
6. Halle, *German Film after Germany*.
7. Schulz-Ojala, "Bei aller Liebe: *Goethe!*"
8. Following Pizer and others, I use the term "Golden Age" to refer to German literary works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, roughly from the period of the Enlightenment through the German Romantic and *Vormärz* epochs. Pizer, *Imagining the Age of Goethe*, 1.
9. Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000), and Tim B. Nelson's *O* (2001) are but a handful of the successful Hollywood Shakespeare film adaptations that emerged in this decade. For additional titles associated with this trend, see French, *Selling Shakespeare to Hollywood* and Burt and Boose, *Shakespeare, The Movie II*. Examples of the British heritage films are Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) and Douglas McGrath's *Emma* (1996). As Andrew Higson argues, one should consider both the US Shakespeare and British heritage films that emerged during this period as Hollywood fare, given that the British films were also largely financed and distributed by Hollywood (Higson, *Film England*, 153). In this chapter, I understand both groups of films as signaling the start of a transnational heritage trend that is later picked up and localized in many parts of the world, with an interesting twist that occurs in the German-speaking context.
10. While beyond the scope of this chapter, it would be productive to look at possible associations between the beginning of government-sponsored media literacy education in the UK and the increase in modernized heritage films and literary adaptations of British works in the 1990s, which—as with the context studied here—seem to have occurred nearly concurrently.
11. Swanson, "'Goethe Boom' Films: *Bildung* Reloaded," 351–57.
12. Schlegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, 38.
13. Pascal Ulli, producer of and actor in *Emilia* (2005), opines as follows: "Artists on German stages repeatedly deal with the classics, deconstruct them, modernize them, fail because of them or grow with them . . . I have never understood why the Americans and the English adapt 'their' Shakespeare six ways to Sunday, sometimes classic, sometimes modern, sometimes experimental, while hardly anyone today makes films of Goethe, Schiller, or Lessing." Ulli, "Vorwort."

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14. Film Policy Review Group, "A Bigger Picture." The report was released in January 1998, and by June a number of these efforts were already well underway.
15. Ibid., 10.
16. Deutscher Bundestag, *Stenographischer Bericht 3*.
17. The priority of this goal would be reflected in state investment in the arts: federal expenditure for culture rose from 944 million euros in 1995 to 1.3 billion in 2012, with the most dramatic increase—nearly 25 percent—occurring between 2005 and 2011. See: Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder, "Kulturfinanzbericht 2014," 34.
18. Since 2007, 60 million euros annually have been earmarked for the direct support of film production. See Wenzel, "Deutscher Film wird mehr gefördert."
19. Filmförderungsanstalt, "Kulturelle Filmförderung der BKM."
20. Weiss and her office closely studied the strategies that had proven successful in European nations as they worked to launch their own mission. The report detailing the inaugural "Kino macht Schule" convention repeatedly stresses Germany's engagement with media literacy at the federal level as belated in comparison to other European nations, particularly the UK. While a historical and comparative analysis of the British and German media-literacy projects would exceed the scope of this chapter, it is important to note two issues: (1) the project of media literacy itself is a transnational phenomenon that likely results in a plurality of localized manifestations extending beyond the German and British examples noted here; and (2), given the intertwined nature of government-driven media literacy projects, which socioculturally and financially support the film industry, more research should be undertaken as to how these issues affect the production, aesthetics, and reception of films on a broader scale.
21. Unger, "Cultivating Film Audiences," 8.
22. The Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, bpb) indicates that this approach was shaped initially by an ambiguous policy from 1994 that sought to integrate media literacy into curricular subjects, but it did not emphasize film literacy specifically. See Kaden, "Filmerziehung im europäischen Vergleich," 28.
23. Hahn, "Filmbildung," 20.
24. Weiss, "Vortrag," 8.
25. Holighaus, "Filmkompetenzerklärung," 4–6.
26. Weiss, "Vortrag," 9.
27. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, "Der Filmkanon."
28. Weiss, "Vortrag," 7–11.
29. The website, run solely by the bpb as of 2017, is still active, and regularly publishes news about current cinema events, provides detailed film reviews with links to ancillary background texts, interviews, and teaching materials, and announces film pedagogy workshops.
30. In the UK, Film Education, which existed from 1985 until it closed in 2013, had sponsored the annual "National School Film Week" since at least 1998 (as mentioned in "A Bigger Picture"). The film week for students that has since replaced this event, labeled the "Into Film Festival," has been hosted annually since 2013 by the British Film Institute.
31. Katrin Wilmann (Media branch director, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung), interview by Bridget Swanson, Berlin, 7 July 2016.
32. This includes initiatives undertaken by filmmakers and private distribution companies that directly engage constituents in the film industry with students and teach-

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ers, such as those undertaken by the non-profit entity Neue Wege des Lernens, e.V., which routinely offers presentations and workshops for teachers, or the work of the private initiative Film macht Schule, which brings together early-career filmmakers and cinephiles who offer practical and experiential workshops to school-age children in Bavaria, Berlin, Brandenburg, Hamburg, and Leipzig.

33. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, "Filmerziehung in deutschen Lehrplänen," 12–17.
34. The exception is Bremen, which the bpb reports as having focused media work on computer literacy, rather than film. Ibid., 14.
35. Ibid., 13–15.
36. Here Barbara Schuster is citing Rochenfeller indirectly. Schuster, "Vision Kino 21."
37. Petra Rockenfeller, cited in Schuster.
38. Here Barbara Schuster is citing Rochenfeller indirectly. Ibid.
39. Vitzthum, "Goethe und Schiller lesen selbst Abiturienten kaum."
40. Vitzthum, "Bedrohte Klassiker: *Fack ju Göhte!*"
41. Leander Haußmann's *Kabale und Liebe*, 2005.
42. Friedrich Fehér's *Kabale und Liebe* (1913), Carl Froehlich's *Luise Millerin* (1922), Curt Goetz-Pflug's *Kabale und Liebe* (1955), Harald Braun's *Kabale und Liebe* (1959), Martin Hellberg's *Kabale und Liebe* (1959), Erich Neuberg's *Kabale und Liebe* (1965), Gerhard Klingenberg's *Kabale und Liebe* (1967), Heinz Schirk's *Kabale und Liebe* (1980), Piet Drescher's *Kabale und Liebe* (1982), and Achim Scherf's *Kabale und Liebe* (2001).
43. Cited in Bühler et al., "Film des Monats: *Goethe!*"
44. A number of anniversaries of canonical German writers' birthdays and deaths that were celebrated in the early 2000s also helped fuel the turn toward Germany's literary canon, as they provided occasions for celebration of their literary output, which was explicitly promoted by public events.
45. Rentschler, *West German Film in the Course of Time*.
46. Dössel, "Unsterblich groß."
47. ZDF, "Leander Haußmann für *Kabale und Liebe*."
48. Dössel. "Unsterblich groß."
49. Sächsische Kinder- und Jugendfilmdienst e.V, "*Kabale und Liebe*."
50. Ibid., 14.
51. Ibid.
52. Poool Filmverleih, "*Kabale und Liebe*: Unterrichtsmaterial."
53. Haußmann and Naujoks, *Die wahre Geschichte von Kabale und Liebe*.
54. Crespo Steinke, "Traveling through the Centuries." Here, the author locates parallels in how the three films intentionally integrate anachronisms and various literary intertexts to address audiences both familiar and unfamiliar with the source texts referenced.
55. IMDbPro.com, "*Young Goethe in Love*."
56. Filipski, "*Young Goethe in Love*."
57. *The Hollywood Reporter*, "*Young Goethe in Love*: Film Review."
58. Literary history tells us that G.E. Lessing had earlier proposed to like-minded writers that the folk-based Faust legend should serve as material for the building of a national literary culture aimed at the middle-class population. See Lessing, "Siebzehnter Brief," 73.
59. I agree here with Crespo Steinke, who argues that such citations "bridge . . . the canonical author's era and that of the present movie audience thanks to the hindsight it has of the writer's entire literary output, including the works not yet written at the time the film is set," but I wish to underscore how these citations also function to

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frame the writer as an adapter. Crespo Steinke, "Traveling through the Centuries," 73.

60. In their analysis of the film, Jürgensen and Kaiser note that Johann's poetic production in the film most frequently occurs outdoors, in natural settings, rather than indoors. They interpret this as Stölzl portraying the *Sturm und Drang* writers in ways that they self-styled themselves, as *Naturkinder*. While I agree with this interpretation, I believe that the starkly disparate visual quality between the two spheres flags the constructedness, or artificiality, of this stylization. See Jürgensen and Kaiser, "I hope I die before I get old."
61. Bühler et al., "Film des Monats: *Goethe!*" 4–5.
62. Warner Bros., "*Goethe!*: Material für Schulische und Außerschulische Bildung."
63. Ibid., 38.
64. Nida-Rümelin, "Rede von Staatsminister Nida-Rümelin."
65. Murray, *The Adaptation Industry*.

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PART II

Transnational Streaming Ambitions

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Chapter 4

Deterritorializing the Stasi in *Deutschland 83/86/89*

Elizabeth Ward

To a certain extent, the international success of *Deutschland 83*, *Deutschland 86*, and *Deutschland 89* was one of the least remarkable aspects of the three-season series. A reflection of how "over the last two decades, transnational co-production has become the new normal for high-end television drama,"[1] *Deutschland 83* was co-financed by the American television channel SundanceTV and the German channel RTL. This was an interesting partnership given SundanceTV's reputation as a broadcaster of independent features and world cinema productions, whereas RTL has long been known for broadcasting American entertainment programs. However, this somewhat surprising collaboration instilled the series with transnational marketability that undoubtedly contributed to its international success. Firstly, *Deutschland 83* was able to be marketed both as popular entertainment (a point that, as I will later argue, is particularly significant for the series' domestic reception) and as "quality television" in international territories. Indeed, when the series was broadcast outside Germany, it frequently did so on channels that aligned far closer with SundanceTV than RTL.[2] Secondly, the German channel RTL is a subsidiary of the RTL Group, an international company operating in Germany, the Netherlands, France, Hungary, and Luxembourg.[3] This opened up transnational distribution opportunities that are not immediately visible through the designation of the series as a US–German co-production. For example, the international distribution rights for the series were handled by Fremantle, a UK-based subsidiary of the RTL Group. Finally, while the series marked a new venture for both SundanceTV and RTL, bringing German history to a mainstream international audience was certainly familiar (and successful) territory for the series' producers UFA Fiction, a production company known for its high-budget historical dramas frequently set in the dark chapters of

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Germany's twentieth-century past, and itself both a subsidiary of the RTL Group and a production unit integrated into Fremantle.

Deutschland 83 premiered at the Berlin Film Festival and subsequently became the first German-subtitled series to play on American television. The series enjoyed its German television premiere at the end of 2015 and was subsequently sold to over one hundred countries. However, the international success of the trilogy places what is perhaps the most surprising aspect of the series in the spotlight, namely its limited domestic success. Viewing figures for *Deutschland 83* fell by nearly 50 percent over the course of the series run, which put the commissioning of the planned second and third installments in doubt. However, the proven international and online success of the first season drew the attention of Amazon Prime Video, which in turn provided over 80 percent of the funding to ensure the production of *Deutschland 86* and *Deutschland 89*—and the continued international reach of the series.[4]

Anna and Jörg Winger's *Deutschland 83* (2015), *Deutschland 86* (2018), and *Deutschland 89* (2020), henceforth collectively referred to as the *Deutschland* series, were always planned as a trilogy. *Deutschland 83* introduces the series' hero, the East German soldier, Martin Rauch. Martin is recruited against his will to the Stasi's foreign espionage agency, the Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung (Main Directorate for Reconnaissance, HVA) by Lenora Rauch (his aunt) and Walter Schweppenstette (an HVA agent who is later revealed to be Martin's father).[5] His mission is to infiltrate the West German Bundeswehr by assuming the identity of the murdered West German soldier, Moritz Stamm, who had been serving as an aide-de-camp to Major General Edel, and thereby send details of the West German and American plans to station missiles in Western Europe back to the HVA in East Berlin. Martin reluctantly accepts the mission having been told that his cooperation will allow his mother (Ingrid Rauch) to receive an urgently needed kidney transplant. While undercover, Martin befriends the son of General Edel, Alex, whose commitment to the peace movement and identity as a gay man position him as an outsider in the military. Meanwhile, Martin's girlfriend, Annett Schneider, is pregnant with their child and moves into the Rauch family home, where she is shown to be a committed socialist willing to inform on those around her. The series is underpinned by personal and political misunderstandings between West and East. Indeed, almost certain nuclear conflict is only averted after Martin exposes his true identity to General Edel and is forced to flee back to the German Democratic Republic (GDR), where he reveals that the military operations unfolding in the West are only an exercise and not, as the

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HVA had believed, preparation for an attack. Upon this revelation, it becomes clear that Schweppenstette has been omitting key information from the reports that he has been sending to his superiors.

Deutschland 86 seeks to demonstrate the global reach of the Cold War. The first episode reveals that Martin is in exile in Angola, where he has been sent by the HVA as punishment for his actions in the first season.[6] The plot of the second season initially moves between South Africa, Angola, and Libya, and it quickly becomes clear that both the Federal Republic and the GDR are pursuing covert weapon sales, which, if made public, would compromise their publicly stated positions and be in breach of UN sanctions. Back in the GDR, Annett has been promoted to the HVA, while Schweppenstette is seeking to rehabilitate himself within the organization by leading "Operation Traumschiff," an operation that is designed to use the purchase of a cruise ship (the one used for the popular West German television series, *Das Traumschiff*) as a means of smuggling weapons to South Africa and thus gaining much needed money for the East German state. Lenora is living in South Africa, where she is working alongside an ANC operative, Rose Seithathi, with whom she is also in a relationship. Martin becomes romantically involved with a West German intelligence agent from the Bundesnachrichtendienst (Federal Intelligence Service, BND), Brigitte Winkelmann. He travels to France and then to West Berlin and the GDR, where his presence threatens to expose the covert trade deals facilitated by a new unit in the HVA, Kommerzielle Koordinierung (Commercial Coordination, KoKo). Headed by Barbara Dietrich, the unit's primary objective is to secure much needed foreign capital for the bankrupt East German state. The clash between economic and ideological priorities becomes a growing point of discord within the HVA, and links the second season with the third.

The final installment of the trilogy, *Deutschland 89*, is set between November 1989 and March 1990, and covers the chaotic weeks that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall and the debates about the future political and economic course of Germany. Martin is now working in the GDR, but he reluctantly accepts one final domestic mission not only from the HVA, but also from the CIA and the BND. His mission quickly spirals out of control after he is tasked with assassinating the newly installed East German head of state, Egon Krenz, while also infiltrating a West German terror network. Lenora is in prison in West Berlin, but she is freed during a prison break that has been orchestrated by Rose, who is subsequently shown to be working for the CIA. Lenora is positioned as the most ideologically orthodox of all the East German characters,

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and she becomes determined to assassinate West German chancellor Helmut Kohl in order to prevent reunification. Her attempts fail and she is killed by a CIA agent, Hector Valdez. Meanwhile, Valdez has become convinced of Martin's complicity in recent terror attacks, and he arrests and tortures Martin. The series' hero is eventually rescued by Schweppenstette, who, with the cooperation of a second CIA agent and the BND's Birgitte Winkelmann, helps Martin to fake his own death. With his new romantic interest Nicole Zangen, Martin then leaves the GDR for one final time for Morocco. The trilogy concludes with a montage of political figures, predominantly from Germany and the United States during the 1990s and 2000s. The final images are designed to accentuate the series' "meta-story" through a focus on "mafia-like capitalism" by seeking to create a link between the nationalist policies of Donald Trump and the fall of the Berlin Wall. This link is not only informed by the political motif of constructing a wall, but is also designed to convey how "the victory of capitalism has led to wanting even more capitalism."[7]

The *Deutschland* series may employ props and a soundtrack designed to situate the audience firmly within the contexts of 1983, 1986, and 1989, but the showrunners Anna Winger and Jörg Winger were adamant that they were not seeking to tell a historically accurate story.[8] Rather, their aim was to use historical events to tell a novel and engaging story in ways that would appeal to younger audiences in particular. Accordingly, the focus of this chapter is not to interrogate the historical fidelity of the plot, but rather to examine the ways in which the *Deutschland* series was shaped to appeal to audiences at home and abroad. By focusing on the series' production, the reshaping of the past, and the presentation of key characters as outsiders, this chapter will explore the ways in which the deterritorialization of the Stasi is at the heart of the series' transnational strategy, above all through the ways in which it combines temporal specificity with spatial relocation.

Anatomy of a Hit

When *Deutschland 83* received its international premiere in February 2015, it was heralded at home and abroad as evidence of Germany's belated ability to produce internationally attractive high-quality drama series. The first two episodes of the eight-part series were screened at the Berlin International Film Festival as part of the inaugural section Berlinale Series, and the full series was subsequently screened on the

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American cable network SundanceTV in June 2015, when it became the first German-language series to be broadcast in the United States.[9] The American success boosted the credentials of the series further, and when it returned to Germany in November 2015, *Deutschland 83* was greeted with considerable anticipation. When Tom Hanks—who at the time was on the European press tour for the Cold War thriller *Bridge of Spies* (2015)—described the series as "fan-tas-tisch," the stage was set for *Deutschland 83* to achieve new viewing records in Germany.[10] However, while the first episode drew 3.2 million viewers (representing a 14.6 percent audience share), viewing figures rapidly decreased with just 1.63 million viewers (a 5.3 percent audience share) tuning in to watch the final episode.[11] Not only did the series lose nearly half of its audience in a month, it lost over 300,000 viewers between its first and second episodes, a drop all the more remarkable given that the first two episodes were screened back-to-back as a double bill.[12] *Deutschland 83* was subsequently described as "the biggest flop of the year,"[13] "a major flop,"[14] and "a surprise hit in the wrong direction of travel: a surprise flop."[15]

While domestic reviews were largely negative, it would nonetheless be misleading to dismiss the impact of the series. Much of the criticism was underpinned by the failure of the series to live up to the perhaps overly high expectations set by early international reviews. In spite of the series' mixed reception, *Deutschland 83* was nominated for—and, in a number of categories, won—the prestigious Deutscher Fernsehpreis, the Goldene Kamera, and the Grimme-Preis. Yet it nevertheless remains true that the series made a far greater popular and critical impact outside of Germany. The series was sold to 110 territories, which made it "one of the most successful German-language series of all time,"[16] and it has been described as "a door opener for German series on the international market."[17] *Deutschland 83* won the International Emmy Award in 2016 and, when the first episode was watched by 2.5 million viewers in the UK, *Deutschland 83* became the most-watched foreign-language drama in British television history. In stark contrast to its domestic reception, the series was subsequently heralded as "Germany's most eagerly awaited drama,"[18] "a cultural phenomenon,"[19] and the "coolest show of the year."[20]

The series' production company described *Deutschland 83* as a "game changer" for German television, but its success nonetheless needs to be placed in a broader industry perspective.[21] In spite of the poor commercial performance of *Deutschland 83* in Germany, it very much builds on highly successful established domestic formats. While international

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audiences have become increasingly familiar with German historical films since the 2000s, especially when it comes to depicting the National Socialist past and the German Democratic Republic on screen, German television has only recently found an export market. As I will later argue, the *Deutschland* series is undoubtedly informed by the commercially successful approaches adopted in German heritage films. However, in order to understand how the series was positioned domestically, we first need to consider what Klaudia Wick has termed "a purely German viewing habit [*Sehgewohnheit*], but not an international television format," namely, the ninety-minute TV film,[22] often billed as "event television."

Since the early 2000s, German television has produced a number of high-budget miniseries and television films, which have been marketed as "must-see TV."[23] Overwhelmingly, miniseries and multipart television films such as *Stauffenberg* (Das Erste, 2004), *Die Luftbrücke—Nur der Himmel war frei* (Sat.1, 2005), *Dresden* (ZDF, 2006), *Die Flucht* (ARD, 2007), and *Unsere Mütter, Unsere Väter* (ZDF, 2013) have focused on World War Two and the immediate postwar years. These series enjoyed considerable success at home, with *Dresden* drawing 12.68 million viewers (a 32.6 percent audience share) and *Die Flucht* drawing 11.25 million viewers (a 31.2 percent audience share). Productions designated "event television" employ high production budgets to infuse often politically problematic periods of German history with melodramatic narratives.[24] The production company teamWorx, led by the highly successful producer Nico Hofmann, very quickly established itself as the leading producer of "event television." The showrunner of the *Deutschland* series, Jörg Winger, has cited the success of *Unsere Mütter, Unsere Väter* (also a teamWorx production) as "paving the way" for the *Deutschland* series, not least in production design and cinematography, which he described as "a style that we know from some event movies."[25] The influence of "event television" can be seen at each stage of the material's development. Like "event television," the *Deutschland* series combines well-known domestic stars (who are often cast against type) with emerging talent.[26] Not only did RTL market *Deutschland 83* as a "German series event," but the series producer was none other than Nico Hofmann, who repeatedly took part in press events and attended screenings.

While the visual language and narrative approaches of the *Deutschland* series undoubtedly have their roots in a domestic format, the commissioning of the series was also very much a response to changing in-

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ternational trends. The emergence of multi-episode high-budget series as a highly exportable format has not only impacted audience viewing habits, it has also changed the funding landscape. In this regard, the commissioning of the *Deutschland* series needs to be seen in relation to two important developments in the audiovisual media market. Firstly, the emergence of OTT (Over-the-Top) media services, and VoD (Video on Demand) and SVoD (Subscription Video on Demand) platforms created an international distribution model that had long eluded German television producers. The entry into the German market of Netflix in 2014 and then Amazon Prime Video in 2016 quickly started to shape production trends and viewing habits. According to the findings of the 2018 *Produzentenstudie*, 53.8 percent of 14 to 29-year-olds in Germany watched linear television in 2017, while 29 percent watched nonlinear television. Just one year later, this had essentially flipped to 28.7 percent and 55.8 percent respectively.[27]

German media funding boards have been key to enabling the international success of German cinema as well as promoting Germany as a favorable location for international film production. In this regard, the second key shift instrumental to the success of the *Deutschland* series came in 2015 when the media boards began to fund television series. The change in funding eligibility was further accelerated by the establishment of the German Motion Picture Fund (GMPF) in 2016 by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy.[28] Alongside funding for films, the GMPF funds "high-end TV and VoD series," with the explicit aim of "enhanc[ing] the competitive strength and innovative power of Germany as a film location, and to offer producers an incentive to produce new and creative formats."[29] While the launch of the GMPF pre-dated the production of *Deutschland 83*, it did provide funding for *Deutschland 86* and *Deutschland 89*.[30] In relation to the *Deutschland* series, perhaps the most significant aspect of the GMPF's financial backing lies in the prerequisites for funding: productions must have a budget of €1.2 million per episode and €7.2 million per season.[31] With GMPF funding capped at €10 million for a series, producers thus have to target international markets in order to ensure financial viability and success. The industry changes that facilitated the production of high-end series resulted in German broadcasters commissioning such content. Indeed Jörg Winger has stated that RTL "explicitly wanted . . . a quality series,"[32] and *Deutschland 83* was subsequently marketed by UFA Fiction as "the first German series format ever."[33]

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Recasting the Past

To a certain extent, discrepancies between domestic and international reception are not new when it comes to the treatment of German history on screen. The German heritage film trend of the mid-2000s and early 2010s was marked by such divides with films such as *Der Untergang* (2004), *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* (2008), and *Das Leben der Anderen* (2006) performing significantly better abroad, both critically and commercially, than they had done at home. Much of the criticism of the films also centered on their melodramatic treatment of the past, with Jan Schulz-Ojala, the film critic for *Der Tagesspiegel*, memorably likening the approach of the production and distribution company Constantin Film to "a waste-disposal company for history [. . . that] deals with the nation's radioactive contemporary history waste and buries it in the permanent disposal site of moving images."[34] There are certainly parallels between the German heritage film and the *Deutschland* series, not least the ways in which they were positioned to appeal to international audiences, above all in English-language markets. At the same time, positioning *Deutschland 83*, *Deutschland 86*, and *Deutschland 89* simply as televisual reiterations of earlier cinematic trends would be to overlook the significance of key narrative and aesthetic strategies employed in the series. German heritage films were overwhelmingly underpinned by historicist approaches designed to create points of identificatory consensus through the avoidance of explicit socio-historical frameworks, while employing a "museal" gaze that "transform[s] the past into an object of consumption."[35] In this way, German heritage filmmakers sought to draw attention to the specificities of German history visually (for example, through the use of authentic props), while simultaneously appealing to universalizing tropes of victimhood, sacrifice, and love. This, in turn, served to lift the German past from the political specificities of its temporal setting. By contrast, the *Deutschland* series embraces the details of the time. Indeed, the use of music, clothes, and references to precise historical moments such as Able Archer 83 (*Deutschland 83*), the assassination of the Swedish prime minister (*Deutschland 86*), and Günter Schabowski's press conference (*Deutschland 89*) self-reflexively draw attention to the cultural, social, and political specificities of the period.

Criticisms that the series deviates from, or simplifies, the historical record overlook the far more important issue of how the *Deutschland* series engages with the past, and the multiple viewing perspectives this then enables. Despite the explicit use of historical events in structuring

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the series' plot, the *Deutschland* series does not rely on viewer knowledge of the period. Here the series owes a particular debt to the film *Good Bye, Lenin!*[36] The 2003 film employed what the director termed "flashes of memory" that "were not crucial to the narrative, but [were] included to remind audiences of that eventful year, and especially to enlighten foreign audiences, whose knowledge of German history was likely to be less detailed."[37] Like Wolfgang Becker's film, the *Deutschland* series overwhelmingly conveys information about specific political events through archival television footage, but it also adds a further level of complexity to this. The television archive that is used to establish the political timeline in the *Deutschland* series is multilingual and multi-perspectival. Not only does this further illustrate the reach of the global Cold War far beyond the German–German border, but it also acts as a subtle commentary on the consumption of news, above all by the series' HVA agents. The HVA agents are repeatedly shown watching Western television reports in order to learn about key events unfolding in the GDR and the Soviet Bloc. For instance, when a secretary interrupts a meeting to tell the assembled agents that Gorbachev has announced details about the Chernobyl disaster (*Deutschland 86*), the agents are shown to be watching the West German RTL news report *7 vor 7* with Hans Meiser.[38] A further example of the multilayered use of the televisual record can be found in the significance of the television program *Traumschiff*. In *Deutschland 86*, Schweppenstette proposes naming the HVA operation to smuggle arms to South Africa "Operation Traumschiff." It is clear to audiences that Schweppenstette has borrowed the name "Traumschiff" from his favorite (West German) television series, *Das Traumschiff*. We are thus presented with a high-ranking HVA officer employed in an organization termed the "sword and shield" of the SED party, who not only enjoys the geographical—and possibly even ideological—escapism of the West German series in his private life, but uses this as inspiration for one of the organization's most important operations. The hypocrisy of this is laid bare: Schweppenstette is responsible for the arrest of Thomas Fischer for running an illegal library of banned books in the basement of Ingrid and Martin's home, while he himself continues to watch West German television illegally. What is particularly striking about the incorporation of these historical details, however, is that no attempt is made to highlight, let alone decode, their significance for an international audience. In so doing, the series establishes a multilevel engagement with the past by addressing two different audience groups at the same time: those with a detailed knowledge of the period depicted on screen, and for whom

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the subtle reworking of ideological frames of reference plays out in the mise-en-scène and dialogue; and those for whom the events primarily serve to structure the action narrative.

The significance of the series' multilayered presentation of historical events also alerts us to the playful reworking of established narratives of the past, not least the decision to place women at the heart of the espionage events. In both the East and West German intelligence agencies, men may occupy the senior and most prominent roles, but the key decisions, actions, and outcomes are driven by Lenora Rauch (HVA) and Brigitte Winkelmann (BND). Meanwhile, Barbara Dietrich (HVA), Annett Schneider (HVA), Rose Seithathi (ANC), and Frau Netz (BND) are instrumental in directing the actions of their respective agencies.[39] The series' recalibration of gender roles is introduced in the very opening moments of the first episode of *Deutschland 83*. The episode opens with an exterior shot of the East German Diplomatic Mission in Bonn to the diegetic sound of President Ronald Regan delivering his "Evil Empire" speech on television. After the first line of the series—"The greatest evil is not done now, but it is conceived and ordered in clear, carpeted, warmed, and well-lighted offices"—the action cuts to the dimly-lit interior of the building. The camera slowly zooms in on the back of a seated character. Upon the line, "by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails, smooth shaven cheeks: they are the focus of evil in the modern world," the inferred image of "evil" evoked by Reagan's speech is shown not to be male but female, as the shot switches to a medium close-up revealing Lenora sitting in a chair, calmy smoking. The opening sequence thus immediately alerts the viewer to the fact that what we see might not correspond to what we hear, and that women will be instrumental to this recalibration.

The most significant reference to the playful reworking of the factual historical record can be found in episode one of *Deutschland 86* when we are introduced to Barbara Dietrich as the head of KoKo (Kommerzielle Koordinierung or Commercial Coordination). Dietrich, who, dressed in a suit and tie, introduces herself through reference to her film actor namesake, outlines the role of her *Sonderkommission* (special commission) in "looking for new ways to turn data into profit." The reason for this is laid bare: "The GDR is expensive. And that's not because we're greedy. It's because equality is expensive. Our ideals are expensive and it's up to government organizations such as ours to support these ideals efficiently." At this point, Annett interrupts Dietrich to ask whether this is "because Moscow is abandoning us." What is particularly striking about this question is the limited context given to viewers. Annett's

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question appears to suggest that the Soviet Union is "abandoning" the GDR economically, whereas what her question actually alludes to is the political and social reforms of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, which the East German leadership opposed. Dietrich then responds with the rhetorical question, "If your neighbor decides to tear off the wallpaper for a change of scenery, does that mean you do the same?" Viewers familiar with East German political history will recognize these words from the infamous interview given by Central Committee member Kurt Hager, often referred to as the chief ideologue of the GDR, to the West German magazine *Stern* in 1987. By reattributing the words to the head of KoKo, a unit whose loyalty to socialist ideals is repeatedly called into question by both Lenora and Martin, the series thus playfully undermines the SED Central Committee's purported motivations for resistance to reform: opposition here is not driven by ideological orthodoxy, but rather by economic need. Finally, the exchange once again affirms the series' reworking of gender roles. Not only are Kurt Hager's words reallocated to one of the only two women in the room, but, in her reply to Annett, Dietrich specifically uses the female form of "neighbor" (*Nachbarin*), once again underlining the move seen throughout the series' retelling of the past to place female figures in the center of the frame.

The use of historical events as building blocks upon which to construct a fictional storyline affords the series' makers the artistic freedom with which to re-present the historical record. With two notable exceptions (namely Ilich Ramírez Sánchez in *Deutschland 83* and Egon Krenz in *Deutschland 89*), care is taken to avoid depicting historical figures on screen through actors. Instead, characters are shown watching television footage of key figures, thereby creating a direct line of continuity between the decisive events in the series' present tense and history's archival record of the past, which is familiar to the viewer. The use of props and music also plays a pivotal role here. While the series certainly draws on tropes from *Ostalgie*-inflected films of the early 2000s through close-up shots of East German food items and technology, this is overwhelmingly used to convey the scarcity of materials or limited technological knowledge in the GDR. This, however, alerts us to one of the series' most significant interventions in representing the GDR on screen: the impulse to point to similarities on both sides of the Wall and the drive to "resist an overtly one-sided understanding of the dominant historical narrative."[40] The temporally estranged gaze that underpins *Ostalgie* is also employed in the sequences set in the Federal Republic. When Martin is shown the hotel room selected for NATO analyst Henrik Mayer in *Deutschland 83*, the manager proudly shows off "all the

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modern luxuries: central heating, clock radio, three television channels, remote control [. . . and] dimmer switches on the lamps."[41]

The attention to period design is complemented with a carefully curated soundtrack. Much attention has been paid to the choice of songs, which are designed to situate the action firmly in 1983, 1986, and 1989. Indeed, one of the motivations for selecting 1983 for the first season was the music because, according to Anna Winger, "the hits . . . instantly transport you to that moment, even if you were born after the fact."[42] In this way, the strategy employed in the *Deutschland* series certainly exhibits parallels with the German heritage film by means of "reinvent[ing] the national past with the help of an excessive accumulation of visual and sonic signifiers."[43] However, once again the *Deutschland* series develops this strategy further in order to provide an additional commentary to the on-screen events. On one level, the soundtrack instills an aural texture to the period detail by means of "sonic signifiers." Without any knowledge of German, audiences can still appreciate the significance of the employment of different musical genres and languages depending on the context of the scene. At the same time, viewers who recognize the titles of the musical choices and the specific lines or sections chosen are afforded an additional layer of commentary. For instance, when Martin is learning how to be an HVA agent in the West, the song in the background is "Keine Heimat" (literally, "no homeland") by Ideal.[44] When we first see Martin return to the family home in Kleinmachnow, the East German pop song "Am Fenster" is playing outside, whereas inside the house where the far younger guests (who, after all, would be the first generation to be educated and socialized exclusively in the GDR) are gathered, "99 Luftballons" by the West German singer Nena is playing. The careful curation of the soundtrack further alerts us to the ways in which the series interweaves multiple points of engagement with the material in ways that never make the plot dependent on audiences decoding them, but rather instills additional layers of meanings beyond the on-screen events.

The opening title sequence has come to represent the series' most iconic use of music. The title sequence opens to the soundtrack of Peter Schilling's English-language version of "Major Tom," with a map of the world featuring North America, Europe, and the Soviet Union divided into yellow countries for the capitalist West, red for states in the communist East, and black for other countries, thus representing the colors of the German flag. As numbers count down on screen, a yellow outline map of divided Germany is replaced by a red outline map of divided Berlin featuring the Brandenburger Tor, which in turn

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is replaced by a map of divided Europe with stills of the Gedächtniskirche in West Berlin and the Ministry for State Security headquarters in East Berlin. Within the outline of divided Germany, a yellow and red-tinted sequence featuring Jonas Nye as Martin plays out in the West and East sections of the map, which is then followed by shots tinted in yellow, red, and black from the series, and the other actors' names. Various words and phrases such as "Stop Cold War" and "Defcon" flash on the screen, before a red-tinted image of Martin in a West German Bundeswehr uniform walking toward the camera closes the sequence as the lyrics "coming home" fade out. This title sequence is often pointed to as evidence of the series' playful navigation of the historical past, and an interweaving of domestic and international viewing positions. What is frequently overlooked, however, is that this sequence was not used for the RTL broadcast of the series. Both the song used—New Order's "Blue Monday"—and the images were replaced for the international market. The RTL title sequence begins with archival footage projected onto Jonas Nye's bare torso: the Brandenburger Tor, Ronald Reagan, Helmut Kohl, Soviet tanks, fighter jets, the West German peace movement, and footage of a nuclear bomb explosion, all interwoven with multilingual news reports. Two reasons underpinned this change. Firstly, the lack of reference to the 1980s, above all through the music selected and the absence of geopolitical background, was considered "not sufficiently comprehensible" for international audiences. Secondly, executives from SundanceTV feared that the naked torso of Nye would "look like a cheap version of *The Americans*."[45] Remarkably then, the title sequence was changed precisely because it was considered to be both too nationally specific and too transnationally similar.

Searching for Home

This chapter has discussed the multilayered narrative and aesthetic codes employed in the *Deutschland* series. However, multilayered constructions of the series' dialogue, visual references, and soundtrack should not be conflated with a transnational aesthetic. Whereas the multilayered references allow the dialogue, mise-en-scène, and soundtrack to play out on different levels, transnational strategies should be understood as the means that facilitate the series to travel both within and beyond national borders. Of course, the transnational need not be in creative tension with the national. As Koichi Iwabuchi has noted, "transnational cultural flows neither fully displace nationally delin-

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eated boundaries, thoughts and feelings, nor do they underestimate the salience of the nation state in the process of globalization."[46] As we have seen, the *Deutschland* series owes a considerable debt to domestic "event television" and the German heritage film. Alongside *Good Bye, Lenin!*, the series also repeatedly draws on the internationally successful (but domestically poorly received) film *Das Leben der Anderen* (2006), both in relation to the interrogation scenes at the Stasi headquarters and at times through the employment of a desaturated color scheme to signify the East visually.[47]

Benedict Schofield has argued that transnationalism should not be understood as a straightforward process of import and export, but rather as one of circulation according to which a "continual process of encounter, translation, and productive dislocation" shapes ideas.[48] Applying Schofield's analysis of theater exchange to series and films, it becomes clear that the use of tropes from domestic and international films and series in the *Deutschland* series is far more complex than it first appears. As Mareike Jenner stresses, transnationalism has "no stable center," and the absorption of such tropes from film and television is accompanied by their localized modification according to the context of both the plot and the production.[49] When series such as *Deutschland 83* then enjoy considerable degrees of success at home and abroad, the erstwhile modified tropes often become the object of export themselves and then become incorporated into international productions. Thus begins an interconnected network of inward absorption and outward export, and inward reabsorption and outward reabsorption. The tropes themselves do not remain stable, but rather are continually modified in relation to self-image and projected external images of what constitutes, for instance, "Germanness."[50]

Here it is particularly helpful to consider Andreas Hepp's distinction between physical and communicative deterritorialization, both of which are applicable to the *Deutschland* series.[51] According to Hepp, communicative deterritorialization should be understood as both the global cross-border reach of the media products themselves, and the representational strategies they employ. Communicative deterritorialization is most evident in the production and reception histories of the series. The *Deutschland* series draws on espionage tropes from international films and series such as the James Bond films, *Homeland*, and *24*, but transforms these within its own reimagining of Cold War German division (inward absorption). This approach has subsequently influenced films such as *Atomic Blonde* (2017) and series such as *Berlin Station* (2016–19), *Honigfrauen* (2017), *Der gleiche Himmel* (2017), *1983*

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(2018), and *The 355* (2022) (outward export). However, marking the process of transnational absorption and reabsorption, *Deutschland 86* and *Deutschland 89* are also influenced by the ways in which these productions adapted tropes from *Deutschland 83*. This multi-nodal approach allows us to understand not only the impact that previous depictions of the Cold War exercise on *Deutschland 83*, but also how *Deutschland 86* and *Deutschland 89* as well as series such as *Der Palast* (2021), *Kleo* (2022), and *Spy/Master* (2023) come to be in creative dialogue with modified tropes from the series' own first season (inward reabsorption).

The most important factor that facilitates the *Deutschland* series' transnational circulation (or to use Hepp's terminology, its physical deterritorialization) is found on the level of plot. At the heart of this strategy is the deterritorialization of the Stasi. The series' protagonist is repeatedly positioned outside of the GDR. This facilitates the mutual disorientation process that is at the heart of the series: no character is ever at home, and everyone perpetually acts as an outsider. Even the characters who are territorially "at home" are positioned as outsiders through their ethnicity, language, sexuality, or political views. As Olivia Landry has argued, deterritorialization can also be understood as being "uprooted from a place (a territory) of belonging or positioning, to exit a space of normativity."[52] In the *Deutschland* series, this form of uprooting not only enables narrative exposition (as characters repeatedly explain their actions, nominally for the sake of other characters, although above all for the audience), but crucially it ties the viewer to the protagonist by denying narrative privileges normally facilitated by dramatic irony. This strategy is introduced in the very first episode. After Martin arrives in the West, he changes into new clothes, and begins his training on how to be an undercover agent. The audience is aligned directly with this immersive instruction through Tischbier's voice-over, which serves to address the audience directly through the blurred connotations of the grammatical object "you":

> In the coming weeks, I'll train you in the key technical aspects of your mission. I'll teach you how to use micro-cameras to photograph documents, how to read texts upside down, and pick security locks. We'll practise the brush pass until you can do it in your sleep. Don't be conspicuous, don't ask questions, and don't try to play the hero . . . We'll teach you all the skills you need.

The overlapping connotative communities of the first-person plural "we" in this sequence, from Martin and Tischbier, to the viewer and Tischbier, and finally from the post-Cold War viewer to the fictional-

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ized HVA, create multiple vantage points, and serve to integrate the viewer into the mission. Meanwhile, a combination of point-of-view shots and sequences in which we observe Martin learning techniques further aligns the viewer with the protagonist, not only as an identificatory hero but also as an outsider who needs to be able to pass as an insider in order to undertake the mission. This strategy enables a process of mutual orientation between the East German spy and the contemporary viewer. In short, both character and viewer learn together what it means to be a Stasi spy.

The dislocation of identity does not only affect Martin. In *Deutschland 86* and *Deutschland 89*, the actions of KoKo, which Lenora and Martin liken to capitalism, also seem at odds with the socialist ideals repeatedly defended by Lenora. Consequently, while Lenora is unquestionably the most ideologically resolute of all the HVA agents, it is her very conviction that marks her as an outsider. The full implications of this come to the fore in the third season, when her vulnerabilities and ultimate downfall are directly attributable to her refusal to subjugate socialist ideals to capitalist necessity in the GDR in the 1980s, and her subsequent inability to adjust to the new realities of post-Wall Germany. The death of Lenora at the end of the series suggests that there is no place in reunified Germany for such beliefs, however much they may have been exaggerated in the plot by this point.

This sense of estrangement through deterritorialization is by no means limited to the East German characters. Alex Edel is also marked as an outsider in *Deutschland 83*, this time on account of his sexual orientation and political convictions. In *Deutschland 83*, he is repeatedly ejected from spaces in the Federal Republic. On multiple occasions, he is reprimanded by his father, a senior officer in the Bundeswehr, for his Green Party affiliations. Yet when he attempts to join the West German peace movement, he is rejected by its members for his aggressive stance. His rejection of his father's model of masculinity, which Alex at one point likens to National Socialism, is followed by his own rejection by Tischbier, who suggests that Alex is pursuing a gay relationship as, in part, an act of rebellion against his father. When Alex then walks out of Tischbier's villa, he reports to the Diplomatic Mission of the GDR in Bonn in order to enlist as an agent, but he is promptly rejected for having embarked on a naive course of action. When he tries to prove the effectiveness of direct action by holding the US officer General Jackson hostage, his plan ends in tragedy. Only when Alex leaves his family and moves to West Berlin does he start to move beyond his status as an outsider. Yet when the mother of his American boyfriend, Tim, reacts

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angrily when she realizes that Alex was romantically involved with her critically injured son, the series underlines how "belonging" is also a socially determined process in which self-agency can never exercise full autonomy.

By framing key characters—above all, the series' protagonist—as outsiders, characters and viewers become aligned in trying to negotiate the codes that regulate different interactions and situations. Where this approach breaks down, however, is in the reduction of ideological difference to surface-level variations. During Martin's initial training session, differences between East and West are at one point reduced to the different words for bread rolls, plastic, supermarket, and orange. This superficiality underpins Martin's mission in *Deutschland 83*. Here, ideological frameworks are reduced to the interchangeability of uniforms. As Tom Smith has discussed, we are first introduced to Martin in his East German military uniform as he interrogates two Western students accused of smuggling books out of the GDR. Here Smith highlights the significance of the shot composition, which ensures that Martin's uniform remains in view throughout.[53] During his admonishment of the two students, Martin effortlessly repeats lines such as "the greatest privilege of socialism is freedom. Freedom from greed," and "Who will win? You greedy capitalists or we, the socialists, who work together for the collective good." After ordering the two students to leave, Martin and an unnamed fellow soldier burst into laughter, thereby revealing their presentation as fierce border guards to be a performance. When Martin adopts the identity of Moritz Stamm in order to infiltrate the Bundeswehr, he continues to perform a role, this time that of a West German soldier. Here his performance is also compelling. He effortlessly tells Alex, "We have to build up our nuclear arsenal to keep the Soviets under control. We have to show those assholes who's boss," leading the general's son to remark, "You sound just like my father."[54] Meanwhile, characters for whom geopolitical rivalries are not simply a matter of rhetoric and performance, for instance the orphaned Angolan child, Roberto, and Rose's daughter, Tandie, in *Deutschland 86*, are reduced to minor characters who appear and reappear for dramatic expediency. Their ability to determine their future cannot be overcome by a simple costume change.

The physical deterritorialization of the characters has a profound impact on the series' depiction of both the Stasi and the GDR. It is telling that while in many films "identification with a 'homeland' is experienced and represented as a crisis" for the transnational protagonist, which leads to "national identity often becom[ing] a placeholder for

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idealized sites of cultural memory and imagined social security," Martin rarely expresses a desire to return to the GDR in any of the *Deutschland* seasons.[55] Rather, his "homeland" is overwhelmingly framed locally; he repeatedly states his wish to return to Kleinmachnow. The drive to align the series' hero with positive connotations of the GDR, which are almost exclusively expressed on a local level and are framed through the prism of the family, serve as a counterpoint to the alignment of the series' villains with the political structures of the East German state.[56]

Deterritorialization not only takes Martin and the other agents beyond the GDR, it also places them in narrative and sociohistorical dialogue with other nation states and their intelligence agencies. As a result, the familiar markers of the East German state—above all, its leadership and the Ministry for State Security—are not unique to the GDR in the series. Rather, the use of archival footage of other state leaders' statements in relation to nuclear conflict (*Deutschland 83*) and the global Cold War (*Deutschland 86*), and the revelations about the espionage tactics carried out by other spy agencies, not only toward foreign targets but also their own citizens (in particular in *Deutschland 89*), serve to demonstrate that through this global interconnectivity the Stasi's actions had echoes of—but by no means direct parallels with—other institutions in the West. An understanding of the specificities of the Stasi is not necessary precisely because the ultimate aim is to demonstrate the operational parallels rather than ruptures with Western agencies.

The drive to frame the actions of the Stasi beyond the confines of the Berlin Wall nonetheless risks downplaying the national specificities of the agency, especially the consequences of its actions on its own citizens. This in part accounts for the introduction of a second storyline in *Deutschland 86* and *Deutschland 89*, namely the focus on Tina Fischer following her attempt to flee the GDR with her family. This exposes a tension that the series is ultimately unable to overcome. The Fischer storyline requires the re-territorialization of the Stasi. However, by this point the series has established neither the political foundations nor the cultural tropes through which to explore this. It is not my contention here that there are uniquely East German or German cultural imaginings of the Stasi. Rather, what the on-screen realization of the Fischer storyline demonstrates is the extent to which the series has become reliant on generic tropes, whose circulation requires them to be decoupled from specifically national sociopolitical contexts.

The simultaneous physical and communicative deterritorialization of the Stasi in the *Deutschland* series allows for its transnational storyline and accounts for its transnational success, but it also serves to

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reveal the inherent tension within this approach: *Deutschland 83* and *Deutschland 86* rely on the jettisoning of the national framework at the very point that *Deutschland 89* requires its reintroduction. The refocus on the national that is required with the introduction of the Fischer storyline is also realized through these same generic tropes, which have hitherto primarily been associated with a deterritorialized setting. When the former Stasi interrogator, Rudi, arrives at Tina's apartment in *Deutschland 89*, the series draws heavily on horror thriller tropes, above all from home invasion films. Yet the very nature of these tropes means that they facilitate action and affect over understanding and explanation. Tina and Rudi's exchanges are designed to address both the lack of justice for the Stasi's victims and the question of how to punish its agents, but the focus on the HVA rather than the domestic actions of the Stasi prior to this point means that the audience has a limited context in which to understand the specific issues at stake. Instead, they are reduced to similarly generic moral issues which may serve to condemn the perpetrator, but still fail to do full justice to the continued trauma of the victim.

This becomes particularly problematic when the series seeks to achieve narrative resolution. The final episode of *Deutschland 89* suggests that there are only two possibilities for the Stasi's agents: death or atonement, but never justice. Not only is there no place in reunified Germany for Lenora, but there is seemingly no place for Martin either. Fuchs and Dietrich are also killed by two former Stasi agents, not in a form of vigilante justice for their victims, but because the former agents are enraged at the couple's attempts to cheat them financially and professionally. Meanwhile, Schweppenstette announces that he intends to use money he acquired while working undercover as a Stasi agent in the West to compensate Stasi victims "and perhaps turn the Stasi headquarters into a museum." The fact that a former Stasi agent is seemingly permitted to determine the parameters of who is a victim and how the Stasi past will be commemorated are issues of little concern for the series. At this very point, the series moves away from the national and returns to its transnational and deterritorialized setting. As Martin leaves for Morocco with his girlfriend and son, the series concludes with REM's "It's the End of the World." Documentary footage of Honecker and Kohl is replaced by images of Angela Merkel, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump, and pictures of the wall at the US–Mexico border are followed by a reverse image of the Berlin Wall falling, thus making it appear as if it were being re-erected. The images of two walls—the US–Mexico border and the Berlin Wall—are certainly designed to be

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a visual challenge to the seeming certainty of the final episode's title ("The End of History") and to the final lyrics we hear ("It's the end of the world as we know it"). In so doing, however, they ultimately serve to expose what underpinned the success of the series' deterritorialized approach in *Deutschland 83* and *Deutschland 86*, and the shortcomings of *Deutschland 89*: the images may look similar, but their contexts are not.

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Notes

1. Hilmes, "Transnational TV."
2. For example, the series was broadcast as part of the "Walter Presents" collection on Channel 4 in the UK, on DR2 in Denmark, on NRK in Norway, on SVT in Sweden, on Yle TV1 in Finland, and on Sky Atlantic in Italy.
3. RTL Group, "Über RTL."
4. Produzentenallianz, "*Deutschland 86* entsteht zu 80 percent finanziert über Amazon."
5. The English-language subtitles actually fail to capture the moment that this plot point is revealed. During an argument between Schweppensteppe and Ingrid in the final episode of season one, Schweppenstette shouts "Lass unseren Jungen aus dem Spiel!," which is subtitled as "Leave Martin out of this!" rather than "Leave *our* boy out of this!"
6. An important plot point in *Deutschland 83* is the fact that Martin is an ideal replacement for Moritz Stamm in every regard except for one: he cannot play the piano. In *Deutschland 86*, we first encounter Martin playing the piano.
7. Jörg Winger cited in Weis, "*Deutschland 86*-Schöpfer Anna und Jörg Winger."
8. Jörg Winger believed this to be a key reason why the series underperformed in Germany. In an interview with *The New York Times*, he argued: "In Germany, there is a certain look that is called 'authentic.' I think there is a certain audience in Germany that doesn't want its historical drama to be stylized." Rogers, "*Deutschland 83* was a hit abroad but a flop at home."
9. This marked the first time an "A festival" created a dedicated space for so-called "Quality Series" in recognition of "changing viewing habits and the growing signifi-

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cance of serial storytelling." Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin, "Berlinale Special & Berlinale Series."

10. *Focus Online*, "Tom Hanks schwärmt von *Deutschland 83*."
11. Ehrenberg and Huber, "Diese Serie passt nicht ins deutsche Fernsehen."
12. *Der Spiegel*, " Mäßige Quoten trotz Hype."
13. Schlacht, "Darum ist meine Serie im TV gefloppt."
14. Hanfeld, "Wieso sieht das keiner?"
15. Tieschky, "Verloren im Netz."
16. Roxborough, "MIPCOM: Amazon Germany Orders Second Season for *Deutschland 83*."
17. Eichner, "Selling Location, Selling History," 205.
18. Hughes, "Germans fascinated by life on either side of the Berlin Wall."
19. Channel 4, "Sequel to critically acclaimed hit Cold War spy thriller *Deutschland 83*."
20. Quote from *Grazia* magazine, republished in Channel 4, "*Deutschland 83* becomes UK's highest rated foreign-language drama."
21. Posener, "Von jetzt an geht Fernsehunterhaltung anders."
22. Wick, "Für alle Bedürfnisse des Fernsehmarktes," 64.
23. Cooke, "Heritage, Heimat," 175.
24. In an interesting sign of how German broadcasters are seeking to compete with OTT and SVoD providers, such series are increasingly broadcast linearly as three ninety-minute programs on consecutive evenings, but made available at the same time as nonlinear fifty-minute episodes on the broadcasters' online VoD platform.
25. Winger, "Making of *Deutschland 83*."
26. Cooke, "Heritage, Heimat," 181.
27. Castendyk and Goldhammer, *Produzentenstudie 2018*, 111.
28. The GMPF is now under the control of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media.
29. Filmförderungsanstalt, "German Motion Picture Fund (GMPF)."
30. In its first year, the GMPF supported *Babylon Berlin*, *You Are Wanted*, *Dark*, *Bad Banks*, and *Berlin Station*. Mikos, "TV Drama Series Production in Germany," 182.
31. Filmförderungsanstalt, "German Motion Picture Fund (GMPF)."
32. Jörg Winger cited in Krauß, *Teen and Quality*, 167.
33. Orth, "Kulisse DDR," 297.
34. Schulz-Ojala, "Extrem laut und unglaublich fern."
35. Koepnick, "Reframing the Past," 50.
36. The series also references *Good Bye, Lenin!* in the first episode of *Deutschland 83*. The shot of Martin in the supermarket in Bonn is a direct reference to Alex in *Good Bye, Lenin!*, which itself was an interfilmic reference to *Das Leben ist eine Baustelle* (1997). *Good Bye, Lenin!* featured Alexander Beyer as Rainer, a West German who pretends to be a committed socialist in the GDR for the sake of the protagonist's mother, who is at risk of suffering a fatal heart attack if she discovers the truth about the fall of the Berlin Wall. In the *Deutschland* series, Beyer plays Tobias Tischbier, a West German law professor and politician who is actually an undercover East German agent, and who teaches Martin how to pretend to be West German.
37. Hodgin, "Aiming to Please?" 108.
38. My thanks to Stephan Ehrig for his help in identifying this.
39. To this list, we could also add the assassins Nina Rudow (HVA), and the unnamed agent in episode two of *Deutschland 83*, as well as Beate—Walter Schweppenstette/Dieter Baumann's "wife" in *Deutschland 89*—who we are told is an accomplished HVA agent but, in a subtle reference to the often limited social and professional roles

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afforded to women in public life in the Federal Republic, is not given a surname in the series.
40. Dueck, "Political Ambiguity," 314.
41. This scene also draws attention to the extent that positive evocations of the National Socialist past remained socially acceptable in certain contexts in West German society. When showing Martin and Alex a hotel room reserved for the NATO chief analyst, the hotel manager boasts to the two soldiers that it is "one of our best rooms. Hitler slept here." Another example occurs in *Deutschland 89* when a West German bank executive enquires about "racial science" as a means of identifying appropriate candidates.
42. Mitchell, "*Deutschland 83* Creator on the Show's Music."
43. Koepnick, "Amerika gibt's überhaupt nicht," 199.
44. Given the importance of music to *Deutschland 83*, it is interesting to note that far fewer songs are used in *Deutschland 86* and *Deutschland 89*. This may well be the result of the series' transition to Amazon Prime Video. The Gesellschaft für musikalische Aufführungs- und mechanische Vervielfältigungsrechte (GEMA) licenses music for use in German television. As GEMA's catalog is extensive and the organization has a "monopoly" on licensing rights, producers are able to select almost any piece of music. However, GEMA only provides rights for German broadcasts, and covers neither foreign territories nor online use. The centrality of the soundtrack to *Deutschland 83* would have meant that rights had to be purchased for the series' export. Once RTL was no longer involved, the associated costs may well explain why far fewer songs are used in the subsequent two seasons. See Mitchell, "*Deutschland 83* Creator on the Show's Music."
45. Lückerath, "Wir wollten etwas schaffen, was sich abhebt."
46. Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 17. See also Jenner, *Netflix and the Re-Invention of Television*, 191.
47. Christian Petzold, who explored the 1980s in the GDR in his film *Barbara* (2012), criticized the use of desaturated color schemes to depict the GDR, arguing that "today, almost like propaganda, we tend to imagine that East Germany had no color at all, that it was all just grey—as if a sunflower that grows in the West somehow reaches up to the sun with much more brilliant color!" Cited in Fisher, *Christian Petzold*, 162.
48. Schofield, "Theatre Without Borders," 235.
49. Jenner, *Netflix and the Re-Invention of Television*, 187.
50. See Schofield, "Theatre Without Borders" and "Who is German?"
51. Hepp, *Cultures of Mediatisation*, 108–9.
52. Landry, *Movement and Performance*, 147.
53. Smith, *Comrades in Arms*, 20.
54. See also ibid., 21.
55. Ezra and Rowden, *Transnational Cinema*, 7–8.
56. This itself is reminiscent of filmic engagements with the GDR from the early 2000s, perhaps most notably *Good Bye, Lenin!*

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Chapter 5

History in the Mainstream

Charité

Carol Anne Costabile-Heming

In March 2017, the publicly held German broadcast network ARD premiered the first German-language historical hospital serial drama, *Charité*. The series premiere attracted 8.32 million domestic viewers, which represented a 25.5 percent market share,[1] making it the most successful launch for a new series in more than twenty-five years,[2] with viewer rates even rivaling those of the immensely popular and long-running *Tatort* crime series.[3] The *Charité* series introduced a new type of television storytelling into the German media market. The extended narrative arc of the six-episode season offered viewers an immersive viewing experience. It is a successful formula, for the global cult hit *Babylon Berlin* also netted nearly 25 percent of the market when it premiered seven months later in October 2017 on the cable network Sky1.[4]

Following the purchase of the series' rights by the online streaming service Netflix, *Charité* became a global hit. Mareike Jenner describes Netflix as a "transnational broadcaster"[5] focused on serving a "transnational audience."[6] Netflix's heavy emphasis on multi-episode serials allows it to position itself within the television market, even though its on-demand platform differs greatly from traditional television production formats such as the *Eventdreiteiler*, to which viewers of prime-time television on German national broadcasters ARD and ZDF would be more accustomed. It is not merely another channel but a "distinct media form."[7] Netflix's on-demand online format means that its content can be accessed by viewers across the globe, anytime and anywhere—a decentered media system.[8] Such decentering transports Netflix out

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of national markets, allowing it to reach viewers across the globe and enabling its transnational reach. Nonetheless, Netflix still operates within national markets and must abide by the specific regulations of each country in which it operates. This national–transnational bifurcation creates an interesting tension, particularly when it comes to the transmission of programming from a traditional national market into a transnational one. I take this context as a starting point for an analysis of the German TV series *Charité* (2017–21), the first two seasons of which were available for on-demand viewing on Netflix in the United States until 2022.[9] The sale of *Charité* to Netflix transported the series from the noncommercial state (public) and domestic German domain into a commercial for-profit domain with an international scope.[10] Netflix, which in the fourth quarter of 2022 recorded nearly 231 million paid subscribers worldwide,[11] acquired the rights to *Charité* in 2018 for multiple locations in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia. This chapter explores what it means when a series with specific German cultural and historical content like *Charité* is "exported" into a global media marketplace. What characteristics of *Charité* appeal to an international audience? Is the series' success based solely on its content, or are there greater (market) forces at play when a series leaves a specific national and cultural context and moves into a transnational one?

Historical and Genre Foundations

The *Charité* series draws heavily on the history and reputation of the Charité hospital. Ranked today among the world's best hospitals, Charité had humble beginnings.[12] It was originally founded in 1710 as a hospital to house those suffering from bubonic plague. Because the outbreak never reached Berlin, the facility was then used as a charity hospital to care for the poor, including beggars, the homeless, and sex workers. After the construction of an anatomical theater in 1713, the hospital began functioning as a pedagogical institute teaching medical practices, even though Berlin had no university at that time. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Charité hospital's reputation as an innovator in the fields of surgery and immunology steadily increased. The series picks up on these innovations in the first season, and in seasons two and three the episodes depict how historical events affect the lives and fates of the characters (both fictional and historical). Moreover, the series remains true to the hospital's origin as a charity

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hospital. The very first episode begins with the deaconess mother superior reminding the nurses and assistants that "Charité" means *Barmherzigkeit* (compassion). Likewise, when the forensic pathologist, Professor Otto Prokop, addresses the hospital staff in the final episode of season three, he encourages them to focus on the hospital's mission, and reminds them of the significance of the hospital's name—compassion. Although everyone recognizes that the construction of the Berlin Wall has heightened political tensions in East and West, the entire auditorium rises to applaud Prokop, and the staff call out in one voice, "*Barmherzigkeit!*" Despite the uncertainty of the future, the staff demonstrate their commitment to the hospital's mission.

At the time of writing, *Charité* comprises eighteen episodes, in three six-episode seasons. While the series is a successful form of historical fiction, presenting internationally known subjects and contexts like Nobel Prize-winning medical advances, World War Two, and the Berlin Wall, the directors also exploit the melodramatic genre of the hospital drama to transmit historical information in an entertaining way. The series follows the conventions of typical hospital dramas, introducing fictional characters who intersect with historical figures, adding elements of romance and melodrama to the weightiness of scientific discovery, the ravages of war, and the tragedies of divided Berlin. Each season incorporates melodramatic narratives, featuring the personal stories and love lives of the fictional female protagonists. Major medical pioneers (Rudolf Virchow, Robert Koch, Emil von Behring, Paul Ehrlich, Ferdinand Sauerbruch, Otto Prokop), whose research had a dramatic impact in advancing medicine, also take center stage.

In the series, the tropes of the hospital drama transcend the very specific location of Berlin's renowned hospital. The sensation and spectacle inherent in the melodramatic plotlines make the stories accessible to audiences across the globe who already are familiar with such series from their own domestic programming.[13] Audiences in Germany are very familiar with hospital melodramas, as long-running domestic series such as *Schwarzwaldklinik*, *In aller Freundschaft*, *Dr Stefan Frank*, *Der Landarzt*, *Der Bergdoktor*, and *Für alle Fälle Stefanie* attest. Likewise, US and UK audiences have long been consumers of entertaining medical dramas from *St. Elsewhere*, *ER*, *Chicago Hope*, and *Grey's Anatomy* in the US (all also aired on German private TV) to *Casualty*, *Holby City*, *Doctors*, and the historical drama *Call the Midwife* in the UK. Like other hospital dramas, *Charité* places the hospital itself at center stage. Typical hospital dramas present medical emergencies, requiring fast-paced action. The explicit portrayals of surgeries and illnesses are staged in

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great detail. The depiction of working conditions and intimate portrayals of the personal lives of medical staff are hallmarks of medical dramas.[14] The inclusion of historical subject matter in *Charité* elevates the series above the formulaic content of these traditional medical dramas, making the series unique and likely contributing to its appeal to international audiences.

The Television Production Landscape in Germany

In order to understand the significance of *Charité* within both its domestic and its international screening contexts, it is instructive briefly to explore the German television production landscape and the role that television mini-series traditionally have played in Germany. Historically, (West) German television favored made-for-TV movies, regular series with continuous plots (such as *Lindenstraße*), and series that had self-contained plots in each episode.[15] Despite this focus on German-language-based content, Lothar Mikos convincingly argues that international cooperation was always at the heart of television's development, for an international orientation made it possible to exchange programming content quite easily.[16] Indeed, the Federal Republic was primarily a TV import market. The first series introduced on (West) German television was the US series *Dallas*, which ARD began airing in 1981. Two years later, ZDF began broadcasting *Denver-Clan* (the US series *Dynasty*). It was only after these initial imported successes that domestic productions of television series took off in the Federal Republic.[17] Despite the market share successes that German programming had, other programming formats (talk shows, courtroom shows, quiz shows, talent shows, "improvement" shows) emerged as licensed formats that originated outside of the Federal Republic, and which West German networks adapted to local contexts.[18] With the emergence of commercial channels, the import of US programming in particular increased. The licensing and imitation of successful international formats resulted in a standardization in the Federal Republic of both the formats and the networks' programming structure.[19] As a result, Mikos argues, "German television has been left behind internationally as far as format development."[20]

Paul Cooke argues that a change took place in German television programming, dating to 2001, with the advent of high-cost miniseries, or as he describes them "event movies."[21] Cooke's analysis focuses specifically on the partnership between teamWorx and Jan Mojto's German

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production and distribution projects, which have produced a string of successful big-budget historical dramas.[22] According to Cooke, these historical dramas simultaneously draw on "international conventions of mainstream genre filmmaking,"[23] and resonate with the German "*Heimat* film, and the impulse to create a community of viewers rooted in a shared understanding of the German past."[24] These historical dramas draw on characteristics of heritage films, which, as Lutz Koepnick writes, "do not simply conjure the historical as an atmospheric background for tales of adventure and melodramatic stories. . . . [Rather,] they present the texture of the past as a source of visual attractions and aural pleasures. [In this way] they transform the past into an object of consumption."[25] While the aim of *Charité* is not to create a sense of *Heimat*, the series nonetheless reverts to themes about the Third Reich and the Cold War in seasons two and three, historical periods with which international audiences are already familiar, and that typically attract a broad viewership.

Although season two bears the title *Charité at War* in the US and UK markets, the series seeks to avoid stereotypical portrayals common to films and television shows about the Third Reich and the Cold War. Indeed, in both seasons two and three, we do not see the clichéd images of Nazis or East Germans that are familiar to international audiences from films such as *Der Untergang* (Downfall, 2004) or *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003). In season two, for instance, audiences hear Hitler's speeches on the radio, but he does not actually appear on screen. Instead of focusing on Nazi leadership, the series presents both historical and fictional characters who support or undermine the regime in subtle ways. The series thus highlights how everyday Germans experienced the final years of the Nazi regime, the ravages of World War Two, and the effects of the war on their daily existence. Likewise, in season three, the episodes focus on the days immediately before and several months after the construction of the Berlin Wall, and how its construction impeded the ability of the Charité hospital staff to care for their patients. The characteristics of hospital dramas coupled with melodramatic effects shift the focus away from the typical overused portrayals of Nazis and East Germans that audiences expect, and onto the intensity of the tasks at hand—the challenges of providing quality care to patients during politically charged times.

The premiere of *Deutschland 83* in the US in 2015 marked Germany's entry into the international television market, which Thomas Lückerath noted was a game changer for the German media landscape.[26] Though it performed poorly domestically, *Deutschland 83* "helped to pave the

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way for other German shows,"[27] and unleashed "a new wave of German historical dramas."[28] The miniseries format was a game changer for German domestic television. The longer narrative story arcs allowed audiences to become immersed in the lives of the protagonists for longer periods of time. Likewise, the genre mixing of historical fiction with melodrama produces gripping subplots that keep audiences returning week after week. Despite *Deutschland 83*'s domestic failure, *Charité* proves that this new format resonated with domestic audiences. Although created specifically for German television, *Charité* was able to cross over into the Netflix streaming platform quite seamlessly and successfully. This success signals that German television has shifted from imitating US and UK pop trends to creating original content that resonates in the international media market. Indeed, in 2018, Netflix's Kelly Luegenbiehl announced that Netflix was investing in German original series because, even though they are "undeniably German," they "tell stories that are relevant to viewers all over the world."[29] While the *Charité* series focuses on the unique historical situations in Germany in each period, both the hospital setting and the day-to-day struggles of the fictional female protagonists are familiar enough to international viewers to allow the content to transfer from the domestic German context into other cultural contexts, and to appeal to viewers across generations and social classes.

The *Charité* series is a form of what Jason Mittell terms "complex television," because each episode presents "a cumulative narrative that builds over time."[30] Such narrative complexity refuses, as Mittell suggests, "to conform to episodic norms of closure, resolution, and distinct storylines."[31] *Charité* focuses intently on everyday life at the hospital as it relates to historical events; the emphasis is less on historical accuracy and more on creating an entertaining and engaging narrative in which viewers can immerse themselves. Each of *Charité*'s three seasons focuses on a specific historical period with a finite cast of characters. The final episode of each season, however, does not bring the narrative to a close. The fictional characters' fates remain open-ended, and viewers can discern further historical developments: medical advances begun in the 1890s continued, the end of World War Two brought significant changes to the residents of Berlin, and the Berlin Wall stood for twenty-eight years.

In all three seasons of the series, there is a balanced focus on key medical pioneers and fictional characters. All of the episodes address the typical characteristics of period films, incorporating details about the historical periods in question including costumes, locations, and

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historical figures; seasons two and three also integrate radio broadcasts and historical film footage. While the first season shies away from the big historical events of the twentieth century, it touches on some of the political and cultural dynamics at play leading up to the two world wars and the Holocaust. *Charité* skips the Weimar Republic, likely because viewers are intimately familiar with the period from *Babylon Berlin*, and the directors wanted to avoid unnecessary comparisons or even competition. Seasons two and three tackle the ravages of war, Nazi race politics, and the division of Germany head on. These are topics familiar to international audiences, and UFA Fiction probably assumed that these themes would attract an even greater international market than the first season. Notably, the second season did not reach the same level of domestic success as the first, with the first episode reaching approximately 17.2 percent of the German population (5.38 million viewers).[32] The third season launched on ARD and Netflix Germany on the same day. ARD recorded an overall share of viewers for the third season of 16 percent, but also notes that it was accessed via the channel's online media platform more than 8 million times.[33]

Season 1: Medical Pioneers

In its first season, the series starts in 1888, the Charité's heyday, focusing on the pioneering work of medical professionals such as Rudolf Virchow, the founder of modern pathology, Paul Ehrlich, founder of chemotherapy, Robert Koch, bacteriologist and microbiologist, and Emil Adolf von Behring, who discovered the diphtheria antitoxin. Although each of these medical pioneers plays a key role in the series, the show also introduces a number of fictional characters, who add depth and melodrama to the historical and scientific plotline. Three specific but interconnected plots occur: Koch's quest to find a cure for tuberculosis, Behring's development of the diphtheria vaccine, and a fictional love triangle. Additionally, we witness tensions between the benefits of scientific discovery and the tenacity of the deaconess, Reverend Mother Marta, who believes that healing comes from God alone. These interconnected subplots enable viewers to develop a connection to the protagonists on screen. The empathy that viewers feel for them creates "an emotional bridge between the historical narrative on the screen and the experience of the viewing audience."[34] *Charité* exploits this viewer empathy by introducing fictional characters and melodrama into the historical content. Through this bond, viewers recognize "the personal-

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ized virtues and vices of characters whose actions have consequences for others,"[35] and become invested in the outcomes of the intertwined plotlines.[36] Combining serious scientific achievements during a critical historical period with melodrama and the genre of the hospital drama sets the series up for broad audience appeal.

The first season's specifically German content interweaves the groundbreaking medical advances of the Charité's famous practitioners in the late nineteenth century with more mundane subplots like love triangles, which are accessible to viewers across social classes, genders, and geographic locations. These different storylines allow different access points, making the series approachable for multiple audiences, both domestically and internationally. The first episode of season one begins dramatically with a medical emergency, following closely the conventions of hospital dramas. The fictional protagonist, 18-year-old Ida Lenze, arrives at the Charité hospital suffering from appendicitis. Dr. Behring performs an emergency operation in front of his students. Although Ida recovers, she must work at the Charité to clear her debt to the hospital. In subsequent episodes, viewers follow Ida in her duties as a nurse assistant, and become immersed in her love life, as two men compete for her affections: the medical student Georg Tischendorf, who assisted Behring with Ida's appendectomy, and Dr. Behring himself. Ida is skeptical of Behring's motives; he had previously courted her when he worked in her father's medical practice. She suspects he lost interest when she was cut off from her inheritance. Despite her skepticism, Ida is drawn to Behring, who, having noticed her interest in medicine, supports her application to medical school in Zurich. Here, Behring's support clashes with Tischendorf's more traditional and patronizing attitude; indeed, Tischendorf's father forbids him from marrying Ida precisely because of her career ambitions. The love triangle melodrama is carried throughout the entire season, which concludes with Ida's release from her debt to the Charité and her acceptance to sit for the medical school admission's exam in Zurich. By using a fictional female protagonist as the glue that binds the various plotlines together, director Sönke Wortmann deftly combines melodramatic romance with historical characters, humanizing these medical pioneers for viewers. Through such creative genre mixing, the series can speak to both domestic and international audiences who become invested in the romance, history, medical pioneering, and hospital drama that the protagonists experience.

The parts of the season that focus on medical advancements are equally gripping, precisely because the series also intersperses details about the physicians' private lives. Robert Koch, who promises that

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a cure for tuberculosis will be available soon, is embroiled in a scandal when he leaves his wife to begin a romantic relationship with the 17-year-old cabaret actress, Hedwig Freiberg. Additionally, there is a battle of egos and a struggle for recognition between Koch and Behring. While Koch's antidote for tuberculosis shows initial promise, the patients that he injected with tuberculin relapse and ultimately succumb to the disease. In a particularly poignant scene, the beloved deaconess nurse, Therese, dies following one of Koch's injections. Her death reinforces the Reverend Mother's belief that healing comes only from God. In an episode that was likely particularly appealing to UK viewers, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who visits Charité in order to learn more about Koch's discovery, then exposes him as a charlatan. Koch's ego prevents him from seeing the value in Behring's research on an antidote for diphtheria, which Behring and Ehrlich eventually perfect, and Behring successfully tests the antidote on another beloved nurse, Stine. While such complex scientific topics could potentially exclude or alienate a broad audience, the melodramatic combinations of a love story and scandal expose the genius as an ordinary man, making him more relatable, and ultimately winning over a general viewership.

While period costume accurately conveys the time period, the season incorporates several elements that also present the charged political climate of the late nineteenth century. The German Reich is in political turmoil as first Kaiser Wilhelm I and then Kaiser Friedrich III succumb to illness. Tischendorf's participation in a fraternity initiation ritual provides the historical backdrop for increasing political nationalism at the time. Although it shies away from historical moralizing, the season is nonetheless punctuated by several antisemitic slights against Dr. Ehrlich and his wife, who needs an emergency C-section to save her life and that of her baby. The midwife's incompetence leads to the baby's death; deaconess Therese tries to perform an emergency baptism on the dying baby, which the midwife refers to as "*Judenbalg*" (Jewish brat), and who also reminds Dr. Ehrlich that his wife should not even be treated in a Christian hospital. These historical markers are likely common knowledge for the domestic German audience, as well as scholars of Jewish studies and the Holocaust, but international audiences may be less familiar with them. Lack of historical and medical knowledge, however, does not detract from the viewing experience because the melodramatic moments with key characters' bouts with illness and subsequent death keep the narrative moving. Moreover, the inclusion of a love triangle softens the politically charged context through romance and melodrama. Shortly before the closing credits, Ida reveals

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the fates of the principal characters, including the achievements of Behring, Koch, Ehrlich, and Virchow, thus filling in knowledge gaps about the significance of these medical pioneers' achievements. Even Ida's story is rounded out, for she indicates that she returned to the Charité ten years later and worked there as a doctor without pay because the hospital refused to recognize her credentials.

Season 2: Charité at War

For its second season, the series fast-forwards nearly fifty years to fall 1943.[37] Premiering on ARD on 19 February 2019, this season focuses as much on the exceptional reputation of the hospital for its success in hygiene and in groundbreaking operating techniques, as on the effect of Nazi race politics and ideology on medicine. Using the years 1943–45 as backdrop, the series follows closely the hospital's history, devoting considerable screen time to the renowned doctor and surgeon Ferdinand Sauerbruch, who was known both for developing innovative surgical techniques and for advances in the development of prostheses.[38] Despite his medical accomplishments, Sauerbruch has been a controversial figure. Although he never joined the Nazi party, he was a nationalist, and he supported their political objectives. Despite these political convictions, he placed medical treatment above politics. Nonetheless, because his sons were soldiers, he had to be cautious about any overt criticism of the Reich.

Other characters in the series reflect the political-ideological spectrum of the time, with equal screen time given to supporters of the Nazi regime as to those trying to undermine it. Medical personnel featured include the psychiatrist and neurologist Max de Crinis, pediatrician Georg Bessau, and the French surgeon Professor Adolphe Jung, who was conscripted and sent to Charité to assist with surgeries. Additional historical figures include resistance fighter Maria Fritsch, Sauerbruch's private secretary and her subsequent husband Fritz Kolbe, Hans von Dohnanyi, and Graf von Stauffenberg. As in the first season, the personal lives of fictional protagonists are the red thread that knits the episodes together. The implementation of Nazi race ideology is treated in the fictional elements of the story. When the fictional protagonist, Anni Waldhausen, gives birth to a baby girl with a disability, she connives to hide her daughter's condition from discovery.

The second season's narrative arc follows the pattern set forth in season one. There is a battle of egos and wills between Sauerbruch and

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the staunch Nazi supporter, de Crinis, a love triangle among fictional characters, and a personal and medical crisis for Anni, a medical student pursuing her studies at the Charité hospital, whose doctoral research focuses on self-inflicted wounds among soldiers. It is this research that leads to a battle of wills between her advisor, de Crinis, and Sauerbruch. When a soldier arrives at the Charité with a gunshot wound to the thigh, de Crinis suspects that the wound is self-inflicted. Sauerbruch successfully amputates part of his leg in order to fit him for a prosthesis. Although Anni's brother, Otto Marquardt, who is on leave from fighting on the front in order to finish his medical studies, fabricates a story about the soldier's injury, de Crinis prevails and the soldier is convicted. A similar test for control occurs when Hans von Dohnanyi, the son-in-law of Karl Bonhoeffer and former head of psychology at Charité (whom de Crinis replaced), is admitted to the hospital with partial paralysis following a stroke that occurred while he was in police custody. Despite Sauerbruch being von Dohnanyi's physician, de Crinis is suspicious of his condition and tries to intervene. The Nazis are eager to bring von Dohnanyi to trial for his resistance activities, and de Crinis instructs nurse Christel to spy on him. On Christmas Eve 1943, Christel sees von Dohnanyi dance with his wife, and discloses the deception to de Crinis. When Sauerbruch travels to Switzerland to give a lecture, de Crinis takes advantage of his absence and orders von Dohnanyi's transport back to prison. Sauerbruch, who is portrayed throughout the season as neutral and even sympathetic to resistance fighters, is shocked by this turn of events as he realizes that his influence and power are waning.

Two fictional plot lines interweave melodrama with Nazi discrimination policies. In the first, Anni experiences a difficult birth, and upon release from the hospital fears her daughter Karin suffers from hydrocephalus. Anni and her husband, Artur, appear to embody the ideals of the Nazi regime. Artur is a pediatrician at the Charité, working under the tutelage of Georg Bessau, and destined to take over upon the latter's retirement. In order to complete his postdoctoral qualification, Bessau provides Artur with access to disabled children housed in the Wiesengrund clinic, who serve as Artur's human guinea pigs. When their daughter's condition does not improve, Sauerbruch and his assistant Adolphe Jung secretly perform surgery on Karin. Artur does not want Karin admitted to the pediatric clinic, because he fears her condition will be discovered. Permanently disabled individuals were not tolerated by the Nazi regime, and Bessau emphasizes that doctors have a responsibility to the ethnic (Aryan) community. Although they

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are fiercely loyal to the Nazi Party, Anni and Artur cannot reconcile their party loyalty with their love for their daughter. Nonetheless, Artur worries that knowledge of Karin's condition could also jeopardize his career. Following Bessau's sudden death, Artur is named head of pediatrics. He then orders his daughter's transport to Wiesengrund, without telling Anni. When she discovers his deceit at the last minute, she rescues Karin and hides her in the Charité's attic.

The second fictional plotline follows a complicated love constellation among minor characters: Otto, nurse Christel, and the orderly Martin Schelling. Christel, a steadfast supporter of Nazism is interested in Otto, but Otto prefers Martin, who shares his own opposition to the Nazi regime. Martin, who has a prior conviction for violations of Paragraph 175, homosexual activity, is frightened by Otto's declaration of love. When Otto is recalled for duty, nurse Christel throws herself at him, declaring she wants to be his wife. Otto rejects her affections, and she thereafter denounces him and Martin; both are subsequently arrested. Martin comes under the care of de Crinis, who informs him he must undergo castration or be sent to a concentration camp. Although Otto is eventually released, he deserts his duty, and cares for Karin in the hideaway. The open portrayal of homosexuality and the very real danger that openness carried with it are not typically part of filmic portrayals of the Nazi regime.[39] The inclusion of this plotline clearly signals director Anno Saul's interest in inclusion and his desire to speak to multiple communities, both domestic and international.

As the season draws to a close, repeated air raids over Berlin force the Charité's patients and personnel to relocate to lower floors, and surgery is moved to the bunker. The Charité grounds become a battlefield, and Russian soldiers take over the operating room bunker, images that international audiences already know well through blockbuster films such as *Der Untergang*. Thanks to his reputation, the Russians trust Sauerbruch to care for their injured comrades. Artur has a sudden change of allegiance, demonstrating kindness to a Jewish father and son by not revealing their identity. In return, the Jewish man gives Artur a Jewish star, so he will not be harmed by the Russians. When nurse Christel attempts to attack a Russian soldier with a scalpel, she is dragged into the courtyard and shot by random fire. Otto, who observed the shooting from his hiding place, is also injured by a stray bullet. In the final scenes, Sauerbruch surrenders control of the hospital to the Russians. Shortly before the closing credits, Anni narrates the characters' fates following the end of the war. She and Artur, who was exonerated by the Allies, divorce. Otto and Martin remained in the German Democratic

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Republic (GDR), which repealed Paragraph 175 in the 1960s. The Russians appointed Sauerbruch as councilman responsible for health care, but the Western Allies found that his reputation had contributed to the esteem of the Nazi regime and so overturned the appointment.

Unlike the first season, where medical and scientific discoveries formed the backbone of the episodes, the familiarity of a war setting allows Saul to centralize private concerns. Both domestic and international audiences can relate to Anni's anxiety about her child's condition. Likewise, audiences tune in to follow Otto and Martin's budding relationship. Anglophone audiences in particular are familiar with the historical period depicted, though they may not have intimate knowledge of Sauerbruch's achievements. His character, though prone to choleric outbursts in the operating room, is rather flat, with little screen time devoted explicitly to his role within the Nazi party. Indeed, his wife repeatedly interjects that her husband is not political. The Sauerbruchs' privileged status is evident during their trip to Switzerland. Original film footage depicts Switzerland as a place where life seems normal and there is no evidence of the ravages of war, prompting Margot to plead to remain there rather than returning to Berlin. Such means of escape were not available to ordinary Germans. In this season, the hospital drama is taken to the extreme in the form of the wartime setting. Melodramatic moments are used effectively to present the atrocities of the Nazi regime, such as the policies on medical experiments and euthanasia. The complexity of Sauerbruch's character undermines audience expectations of the evil Nazi doctor. Indeed, the historical doctors portrayed in the series follow a spectrum from the good resistance fighter in the form of Adolphe Jung to the sinister de Crinis, who commits suicide in the final episode rather than face up to his crimes. The final episode also avoids references to the brutality exercised by Russian soldiers, glossing over questions about the historical accuracy of portrayals of the Russian commander as friendly and collaborative.

Season 3: The Wall

Season three takes place August through October 1961 in the weeks immediately prior to and following the construction of the Berlin Wall, and introduces the forensic pathologist Otto Prokop, neonatologist Ingeborg Rapoport, and gynecologist Helmut Kraatz. Like other parts of the GDR, the Charité hospital struggles to maintain its high standards of care, as increasing numbers of staff leave for the West,[40] and supply

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shortages threaten to compromise treatment. While there is limited attention paid to the political reasons that necessitated the construction of the Berlin Wall, this season does draw attention to the isolation of East Berlin in the weeks immediately after the closing of the border, as the hospital struggles with supply shortages due to the border closure. As in the other two seasons, a fictional protagonist drives the narrative. Dr. Ella Wendt is a headstrong and compassionate internist, assigned to the Charité to help staff the internal medicine clinic. In addition to her medical duties, Wendt wants to pursue her own research, and must fight for research space and resources.

Like the first two seasons, *Charité*'s third season follows the life of a fictional female protagonist within the historical context of the tensions in divided Berlin; but unlike the other two seasons, the female protagonist's personal life plays less of a role. There is a hint of romance between Ella and one of the hospital's surgeons, Dr. Curt Bruncken. When he defects to the West, Ella turns her attention to her patients and her research. This is a subtle subversion of a classic GDR love triangle, wherein the GDR wins the protagonist's heart, albeit for humanitarian rather than political reasons. Dramatic elements draw their currency from the political tensions. Immediately in the first episode, the heightened political frictions punctuate the action, as military police, unwilling to disclose the reason for their actions, deposit blood reserves in Prokop's lab. Moreover, the season suggests that medicine is more advanced in the East than in the West, when a West Berlin couple bring their son, who is suffering from an undetermined illness, to the Charité for treatment. Rapoport diagnoses polio and successfully cures him by using an antiquated iron lung stored in the hospital's basement. The GDR had introduced a polio vaccine requirement, which eradicated the disease in that part of Germany. The West Germans, by contrast, had been hesitant to implement vaccination, resulting in a polio epidemic in the West.

Throughout the season, radio and television broadcasts report on the mounting numbers of GDR citizens fleeing to the West. In the second episode, Ella and Curt witness border guards sealing the border to West Berlin. As a result of the border closing, the Charité sits squarely in the heavily fortified border region, and the windows facing the Humboldt harbor are sealed. At the end of episode three, the reality of the border closure sets in when hospital staff hear gunshots and the camera shows a body being removed from the water. Ella fears that it could be Curt, who had previously expressed his discontent about conditions in East Berlin, and who had disappeared from the hospital unannounced. Epi-

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sode four erases the suspense, revealing that the corpse belongs to an unnamed man. Prokop is tasked with conducting an autopsy and determines that the man died of a gunshot wound to the head.[41] The brutality and corruption of the GDR regime become evident in this scene as government officials confiscate the report and all copies. In a small act of defiance, Prokop secretly dictates another report and stows it in his office safe.

This season has much more melodrama than the first two, particularly as the lives of patients become increasingly intertwined with those of the Charité staff. Ella is a particularly empathetic doctor who continuously promises her patients that everything will turn out well, but this is repeatedly not the case. When a miner from Wismuth, who has a chronic cough, seeks treatment for a broken leg, Ella admits him for observation. Ella's supervisor, Alex Nowak, tries unsuccessfully to get the man's medical records from Wismuth. When the man dies unexpectedly, Nowack, whom the party secretary had convinced to join the SED by promising him the position of senior physician, suppresses the truth about the cause of death. Despite the fact that Prokop's autopsy revealed lung cancer, Nowack informs the daughter that her father had died of a lung embolism. Ella is both shocked and disappointed that the truth is covered up. A shortage of penicillin forces Ella and Nowack to decide between treating a patient with pellagra, and treating the Charité's beloved custodian, Fritz, who is suffering from blood poisoning. Fortunately, Prokop, who as an Austrian citizen is able to traverse the East–West border, is able to secure some from West Berlin, and both men recover.

Like the other two seasons, viewers witness a battle of wills between two medical practitioners. Unlike the other two seasons, however, it is the fictional Ella who spars with the esteemed pathologist, Prokop. In order to conduct her research on the haptoglobin protein as a possible early indicator of cancer, Wendt needs Prokop's assistance, but he is initially dismissive. When her research results show promise, Prokop's attitude towards her softens, and he invites her to present her findings at an upcoming cancer conference in West Berlin. Both the party secretary and her supervisor Nowack have doubts about Ella's loyalty, fearing that she may want to rekindle her romance with Curt, but they ultimately allow her to travel. Her research is well received at the conference, and she finds herself facing a difficult decision. She has reunited with Curt, and the conference organizer offers her a position with his West German research team immediately. Rather than follow her dream, she returns to the Charité where, as the concluding voice-

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over informs, she remained until after the fall of the Wall. Here, the melodramatic love triangle plays out between Ella's feelings for Curt, and her loyalty to her research and her patients at the Charité.

The Cold War is a topic popular with international viewers, as the success of Hollywood films like *Bridge of Spies* (2015) attest. Unlike that film, however, the third season of *Charité* focuses exclusively on East Berlin, which is no surprise given the Charité hospital's geographic location. The only images of West Berlin that appear on screen are the border signs and border crossings. As a result, this season presents a decidedly one-sided perspective of that period. This might appeal to international audiences, who are less familiar with East German history, but the lack of critical engagement with the ramifications of the East German government's decision to build a permanent barricade around West Berlin likely fell flat with domestic viewers. One review noted that despite the heightened tensions of the time, the characters' dialogue was "conspicuously apolitical."[42] Indeed, any attempts at political dialogue in the episodes are quashed by party officials.

Conclusion

It can clearly be observed that *Charité* displays qualities in line with what Jenner has coined a "grammar of transnationalism"[43]: the successful combination of a globally understood visual genre (melodrama, hospital drama) with German medical and twentieth-century history. Viewers find series appealing because they can immerse themselves in another world, granting viewers a voyeuristic, intimate, and close look at the complicated lives of others that is not possible in any other medium.[44] In the case of *Charité*, the series also transports viewers to important and interesting periods of German history that significantly altered how medicine is practised, as well as how wars are fought and political ideologies defended. The emphasis on the hospital quotidian in *Charité* situates it squarely within the genre of medical or hospital dramas. All three seasons of the series incorporate the typical elements of hospital dramas, including the portrayal of medical treatments, body trauma, an explicit depiction of illness, and detailed attention to the working and personal lives of both the historical and the fictional medical professionals.[45] The series also appeals to a more educated and specialized audience with the inclusion of groundbreaking medical advances. The research that these leading doctors and surgeons perform is a substantive narrative thread. Although they are presented as sci-

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entific geniuses, the series also depict their private lives, making the plotlines attractive to both a specialist and a general audience. This is further enhanced by the introduction of fictional protagonists who add depth and melodrama to the historical and scientific plotline. These fictional characters and plotlines fuel melodramatic moments. The three fictional female protagonists around whom the plots of each season revolve provide a counterweight to the heavy medical and historical events that inform the contexts of each season. Significantly, these three female leads form their own narrative progression. Season one's Ida desires to study medicine, but is prohibited from doing so in Germany. The medical student, Anni, in season two embodies the fulfillment of Ida's dream to go to medical school. Ella's stature as a physician and her groundbreaking research in season three highlights her value as a medical professional, and serves as a counterbalance to the injustice Ida suffered as an unpaid physician at the Charité following her graduation from medical school. While Carla Marcantonio suggests that melodramatic representation can provide a shorthand for the representation of national history in fictional form,[46] I propose that the melodrama of the hospital drama feeds into the *Charité* series' international appeal.

As Krauß has noted, streaming Video on Demand services like Netflix propel local, in this case, German, content into transnational markets.[47] Because it was originally written for a domestic German television audience, *Charité*'s successful transition to the streaming platform makes it singularly worthy of study. Within Netflix's international markets, *Charité*'s directors are also able to put a new spin on aspects of Germany's traumatic past, focusing, for instance, on positive aspects of Sauerbruch's biography and Prokop's small acts of defiance. Strikingly, however, the last two seasons do not engage in any form of concrete *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past). Although historically accurate, the episodes do not reflect critically on Germany's past atrocities. Indeed, it seems that the treatment of homosexuals and disabled children in season two is only a plotline because of the connection to the fictional protagonists. Likewise, in season three, the construction of the Berlin Wall is presented as an inconvenience to the doctors, whose paths to their clinics have become longer because of the border. The personal disruption and despair that the Wall caused average citizens is not portrayed on the screen. Instead, the Charité is depicted as an island of compassion that exists almost outside of politics, offering what Gumbert terms "nostalgic narrative[s]" about the historical periods in question.[48] Like the heritage films, which were criticized for their lack of critical engagement with the past, *Charité*'s suc-

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cess abroad is not matched domestically. To use Cooke's terminology, *Charité* redefines and reconfigures the past in the present, "allowing the viewer to indulge the seemingly insatiable popular appetite for stories about the nation's history, while also celebrating its transcendence of this past."[49] While German television productions have predominantly been shaped "by a national orientation and distribution,"[50] *Charité* has been able to break the traditional German television mold by tackling topics with wide-ranging appeal that transcends national discourses.

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Notes

1. Weis, "Primetime Check."
2. Krei, "Netflix sichert sich Rechte an Serienerfolg *Charité*."
3. Between 7 and 10 million people from all age groups and walks of life regularly watch a given episode of *Tatort*. See Hissnauer, Scherer, and Stockinger, "Zwischen Serie und Werk," 7.
4. This is a significant market share given that Sky1 is a private cable channel to which fewer viewers have access than a publicly held channel like ARD. Clark, "*Babylon Berlin*."
5. Jenner, *Netflix and the Re-invention of Television*, 4.
6. Ibid., 26
7. Ibid., 187.
8. Couldry, *Media, Society, World*.
9. The series has also been available for streaming by German audiences in the ARD Mediathek. At the time of writing, *Charité* season three was not yet available in the United States.
10. For an insightful essay on the role of Netflix in Germany, see Stiegler, "Invading Europe."
11. Stoll, "Quarterly Netflix Subscribers Count Worldwide 2013–2022."
12. "The World's Best Hospitals 2020."

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13. Gledhill and Williams, "Introduction," 3.
14. See Jacobs, *Body Trauma TV*.
15. Krauß, "Quality Series," 50 and 54. The German crime drama *Derrick* aired a total of 281 episodes between 1974 and 1998.
16. Mikos, "Germany as TV Show Import Market," 157–58.
17. Ibid., 164–65.
18. Ibid., 165–66.
19. Ibid., 171.
20. Ibid., 172.
21. Cooke, "Heritage, *Heimat*," 175. While Cooke focuses his analysis primarily on the large-scale historical programming produced by teamWorx, I think his argument can be extended to my analysis of *Charité* here.
22. Nico Hoffmann was a leading producer of the teamWorx films and therefore well versed in the event television genre. This likely is a contributing factor to *Charité*'s success.
23. Cooke, "Heritage, *Heimat*," 183.
24. Ibid., 177.
25. Koepnick, "Reframing the Past," 50.
26. Rogers, "*Deutschland 83*."
27. Ibid.
28. Gumbert, "The *Deutschland* Series," 352. UFA Fiction is also credited with *Deutschland 83*, and two members of *Charité*'s production crew, Nico Hoffmann and Henriette Lippold, also worked on *Deutschland 83*.
29. Netflix, "Netflix Announces Five New German Original Titles."
30. Mittell, *Complex TV*, 18. While Mittell bases his study on US television series, an examination of narrative complexity is relevant in a transnational context, and likely is part of the appeal of *Charité* for international audiences.
31. Ibid., 21.
32. "*Charité* auf Platz eins." The availability of the entire season in the ARD Mediathek a week prior to the live broadcast may account for the decline in viewership.
33. "*Charité*—Dritte Staffel mit großer Zuschauerresonanz im Ersten."
34. Cooke, "Heritage, *Heimat*," 188.
35. Gledhill and Williams, "Introduction," 5.
36. It seems that ARD was well aware of the power of the bond between viewers and characters, for it did not follow the example of *Deutschland 83*, which was broadcast in a linear fashion. ARD made all six episodes of season two available in its Mediathek on 12 February 2019, a full week before it debuted the first two episodes. Season one was also available for streaming in the Mediathek while season two was broadcast.
37. It is marketed in the US and UK under the title *Charité at War*.
38. See Hardinghouse, *Ferdinand Sauerbruch*, 23–24. Sauerbruch's character is based substantially on the diary of his assistant, Adolphe Jung.
39. One notable exception is the 1999 film *Aimée und Jaguar*.
40. Gerhard Jaeckel notes that from 1960 until the construction of the Wall some 250 doctors fled to the West. See Jaeckel, *Die Charité*, 573.
41. The date is 24 August, and this is a reference to Günter Litfin, who had tried to escape by swimming to the West. He was shot by border guards, the first recorded death at the Berlin Wall.
42. Nees, "*Charité*, Season 3."
43. Jenner, *Netflix and the Re-Invention of Television*, 227.

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44. Eichner, Mikos, and Winter, *Transnationale Serienkultur*, 10.
45. Jacobs, *Body Trauma TV*, 1.
46. Marcantonio, *Global Melodrama*, 2.
47. Krauß, "Quality Series," 48.
48. Gumbert, "The *Deutschland* Series," 352.
49. Cooke, "Heritage, *Heimat*," 191.
50. Krauß, "Quality Series," 56.

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Chapter 6

Mapping Berlin

Space, Trauma, and Transnationalism in Dominik Graf's *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* and the Wachowskis' *Sense8*

Felipe Espinoza Garrido

In the past decade, organized crime has come to define the televisual imagination of Berlin; murderous foreigners, gang rivalries, and the archaic rituals of the heavily stylized mob have become trademarks of series such as *Dogs of Berlin* (2018), *Beat* (2018), and *4 Blocks* (2017–19). In this respect, Dominik Graf's Berlin-set miniseries *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* (2010) and the Tom Tykwer-directed Berlin sections of Lana and Lilly Wachowski's *Sense8* (2015–18) are no different, as both revolve around the criminal distribution of power and space in the decades after German reunification. In these two series, however, the order imposed on the city space by its ganglands becomes a symbolic and structural idiom for the inherent epistemic violence of Berlin's historical transnationalization. In other words, both series' understanding of how the space of criminal Berlin shapes and is shaped by historico-political ruptures relies on a shared conception of reunification as both traumatic and transnational: an asymmetrical transposition of one country into another that is marked by the movement of a national border across its subjects. Furthermore, both series foreground historical events that evoke such spatial practices of (re-)drawing borders in the first place. This transnational rupture is represented through ensuing waves of criminal activity, and is marked as a hereditary trauma that can only be negotiated via imaginaries of transnational crime. At the same time, there are stark differences between the two shows in their

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understanding of nationality, belonging, and the function of Berlin as a setting. Despite focusing on the eventually successful operations of its Jewish, Latvian-German protagonist Marek Gorsky (Max Riemelt), *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* regularly indulges in essentialist generalizations about national and religious identities in post-*Wende* Berlin, and it at times champions a re-entrenchment of the nation's borders. Highly ambivalent in its showcasing of the visual, spatial, and structural comparability between Berlin's allegedly "foreign" underworld and its police force, *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* may work towards a transnational aesthetic via its formal structures, but ultimately remains trapped in the ethnic organization of its turf wars.

As this chapter argues, *Sense8* attempts to pick up the loose ends and rewrite the disturbing ethnic innuendos of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*. Albeit sporting a number of globally dispersed key settings, *Sense8* can be located in direct legacy of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*, not simply through its casting of Max Riemelt as the Berlin section's lead, Wolfgang, or because its police officer protagonist is named Will Gorski (Brian J. Smith) in reference to Riemelt's intertextual alter ego, but primarily because *Sense8*'s televisual Berlin is equally caught up in a violent gang war that harkens back to German reunification. Fundamentally transnational in its imagery, use of space, and conception as a story about sensory transhuman connectivity, *Sense8* in particular draws upon *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s cinematic strategies to represent trauma as spatially encoded into Berlin's city space. However, in so doing, as this chapter will conclude, *Sense8* also adapts the fundamental tensions between an innovative cinematic appreciation of Berlin's potential as a structuring agent and storylines that are ultimately restricted by their traditional reproduction of nationalist, ethnocentric hegemonies.

Transnational Connections

Before delving into aesthetic and thematic convergences between *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* and *Sense8*, I would like to explore the links between the two shows' production processes, with a focus on the lack of international reception of the former. *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*, a ten-episode police thriller miniseries directed by Dominik Graf which premiered at the Berlinale and on ARTE in 2010, is often heralded as *the* prime example of German quality TV. In particular, the complexity of 150 speaking roles, with long subtitled scenes that detail cultural

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practices, weddings, birthdays, and funerals in the milieus of Russian, Ukrainian, and Baltic-Jewish immigrants, have garnered critical attention for their lack of victimization and narrative complexity.[1] The series has won numerous awards,[2] and elicited structural comparisons with benchmark "quality television" crime series such as *The Sopranos*[3] and *The Wire*,[4] not least by Graf himself.[5] In comparing his own work—favorably—with *The Wire*'s alleged lack of glamour and showmanship, Julika Griem points out that Graf "positions his product in an international field that he perceives as competitive."[6] However, despite Graf's positioning, *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s international DVD distribution, and its television debut on the Franco-German channel ARTE, if we discount anecdotal evidence of screenings on US campuses or by Goethe Institutes around the globe, there is no international reception to speak of. Notwithstanding its critical acclaim, and its much-lauded Berlinale premiere, even its local distribution was infamously flawed. Germany's largest public broadcaster, ARD, scheduled the series on a Friday night slot, reaching a comparatively small audience of two million viewers per episode. As a result, the show's final three instalments were ungenerously lumped together, leading to harsh criticism across the German press. Despite its immanent negotiation of a fundamentally transnational Germany, it might well be the series' mostly local production—public service broadcasters and a German production company, Typhoon—that has forestalled international success.[7] As a result, the series' ties to *Sense8* do not rely on its own structural transnational embeddedness, but on the industry-driven "conscious transnationalism"[8] of German cinema's turn toward global distribution throughout the 1990s and early 2000s.

The success of these endeavors must include mentions of Tom Tykwer's global box-office hit *Lola rennt* [Run Lola Run], produced by his decidedly internationally oriented production company X Filme Creative Pool.[9] Indeed, in the curious case of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* and *Sense8*'s artistic and thematic kinship, *Lola rennt*'s international distribution plays a central role. Festival exposure throughout the world (and a 1999 Sundance audience award) contributed significantly to its international release, and spearheaded German distribution efforts in the following years.[10] Hailed as a breakthrough for Germany's ailing industry, contemporary receptions of the film repeatedly paralleled its alternate timelines to films such as *Sliding Doors* (1998) and *Go* (1999), but also, as Tykwer himself has noted, to *The Matrix*.[11] Both films were released within three weeks of each other in the United States, and Lana Wachowski has named *Lola rennt* as one of the few films she went to see

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multiple times in a row.[12] The three directors' mutual appreciation soon led to collaborations, from Tykwer contributing to the soundtrack of *The Matrix Revolutions* (2003) and eventually co-directing and co-producing *Cloud Atlas* (2012) before the team embarked on *Sense8* together.[13] It is no surprise, then, that *Sense8*'s references to *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* hinge upon Tykwer's involvement. Max Riemelt, for instance, cites Tykwer's appreciation of Graf's series as the main reason for his casting in *Sense8*.[14] As such, these seemingly individual, personal connections and appendant casting choices, these German-American word-of-mouth recommendations, must be read as expressions of an underlying, systematic interconnectedness between German and Hollywood film production, in which talent, narrative traditions, and aesthetic cross-pollinations are strategically deployed—even allowing them to productively draw upon a series like *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*, which may appeal to a vast number of Germany's industry professionals, critics, and increasingly scholars, but only to a limited, and decidedly national, audience.

Im Angesicht des Verbrechens and Berlin's Traumatic Spatiality

Im Angesicht des Verbrechens's central storyline follows Marek Gorsky, a Latvian Jewish police officer in Germany, grappling with both his identity and his desire to avenge his brother, Grisha, murdered by the 'Russian' mob ten years before the events of the show. With his own family—mainly his brother-in-law, Misha (Mišel Matičević), and later, his sister Stella (Marie Bäumer)—involved in criminal activities, Marek eventually renounces his family's criminal code of honor and his ties to organized crime when he arrests Grisha's murderer, Sergej Sokolov (Georgii Povolotskyi), thus forgoing personal revenge. Throughout, *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* focuses on Marek's coming to terms with Grisha's traumatic murder, as he oscillates between taking tip-offs from his family's criminal associates and plotting revenge, on the one hand, and abiding by the rule of law on the other. If Marek's past, however, becomes a source of unrest and indecision that confronts him with multiple layers of unbelonging—a police officer from a criminal family, and a Baltic Jew in Berlin's white, German police force—his struggle stands metonymically for a larger negotiation of Germany's post-reunification identity, articulated in the very last episode by Marek's partner, Sven Lottner (Ronald Zehrfeld): "I read that in a hundred years there will

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only be 10 million Germans left. Can you imagine what this place will look like?" Lottner's ethnicization of Germanness implies its incompatibility with immigrants—regardless of their nationality. In the context of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*, these groupings can, with the exception of Marek and two corrupt colleagues, be neatly mapped along the lines of the German police and foreign criminals. Furthermore, over the course of its ten episodes, the series goes to great lengths to emphasize that the perceived "invasion" of organized "Russian" crime that spurs Lottner's fear of ethnic eradication is the result of the demise of the Soviet Union and reunification of Germany. Whether on a societal level (foreign organized crime) or a personal level (Grisha's murder), in *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* the very concept of pastness is imbued with catastrophe, threatening the disintegration of its protagonists' individual and collective identities. Such disintegrations, I argue, are primarily negotiated and made visible via the spatiality of Berlin. I will begin the following section by outlining how deeply intertwined the notions of space and trauma are on an individual level, before turning to the series' visual organization of the city space through crime.

Cinematic Space and Individual Trauma

The series' diachronic approach, its general mode of visualizing traumatic pastness, relies predominantly on flashbacks and their appendant didactic repetitions of earlier scenes. Characters' recent screen appearances are visually recalled as "*Erinnerungsbilder*" when their names are mentioned again,[15] to the point where key images such as Sokolov's escape or Grisha's murder are constantly repeated throughout the series. Such strategies are not uncommon in Graf's work, but what sets these constant visual returns apart from his other works is *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s overall stylization as *Wende*-negotiation. Graf's earlier *München: Geheimnisse einer Stadt* [Munich: Secrets of a City] (2000), for instance, which "repeatedly shows us how each neighborhood, each street, each corner, and each building might elicit another memory and, by extension, another urban history,"[16] may thus operate with a similar obsession of returning to key locales, yet in *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* such returns and their spatial specificity within Berlin are marked as predominantly traumatic rather than nostalgic.

Such disruptive flashbacks are firmly established as a central narrative trope in the first episode, "Berlin ist das Paradies," via two sequences that focus on Grisha's death, and which are paradigmatic for the visualized past. The first of these takes place early on, when

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Marek's voice-over recounts a small-scale raid to apprehend a fugitive Russian-German wanted for robbery (an event leading up to Marek and his team's involvement in the pursuit of organized crime). Entering the flat, they only encounter the fugitive's Russophone parents, his sister, and his younger brother, who threatens them with a gas pistol. The family constellation parallels Marek's own childhood: two brothers and a sister, a history of migration from Eastern Europe, and a motif of violence, the gun. As a result, Marek is reminded of a childhood episode in which Grisha's toying with a gun and his sister's intervention foreshadowed their eventual involvement in criminal activities—and, moreover, Grisha's death. However, cinematically the trigger for Marek's flashback is not the character constellation per se but rather the spatiality of the scene. It is only the sister's appearance in the doorway behind Marek, and hence the character arrangement within the flat and the scene's framing through Marek's point-of-view shots, that initiates the sequence of memories (Figure 6.1). As if to underline the convergence of Marek's traumatic flashback with his positioning in the room, the camera follows his gaze back and forth between the fugitive siblings, just like he gazed back and forth between his own siblings some ten years earlier. This first introduction of the series' flashback mode thus emphasizes traumatic historical repetition along three axes—character constellations, spatial arrangements, and cinematography. *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s focus on the spatiality of trauma becomes even more relevant once the series anchors Marek's traumatic memories within the space of Berlin.

The same function of space is visible in the episode's second flashback that cuts back to Grisha's murder. However, this time, the spatial recognition not only transcends Marek's memory, but it is also anchored in a recognizable space in Berlin. Visiting the scene of the crime, the series takes great care to place Marek underneath the street sign of Fidicinstraße, in front of a now-derelict bar called Zur Sonne, as he waits for his sister to join him in paying their respects. A slow camera turn around the area completes this establishing shot, recognizably placing the scene on a typical corner of Kreuzberg's Bergmannkiez, opposite its prominent water tower. With ominous music setting in, *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* cuts to a flashback of Grisha's murder in front of the aforementioned bar. Here, as in the ensuing flashbacks that cut across Marek and Stella's mourning, it is not Marek's own recognition of spatial relations but the camera's establishment of the city space that triggers them. Indeed, the entire scene is permeated by framings and movements that harken back to Marek's memory, as well as to the series' own representation of Grisha's murder. If *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* has earlier

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Figure 6.1. The framing of Marek's point of view, and the spatial arrangement of the characters in "Berlin ist das Paradies" (top: 6:58) trigger his paradigmatic flashbacks (bottom: 7:00). Screenshots by Felipe Espinoza Garrido.

suggested that specific spaces and configurations evoke Marek's traumata, the series' second iteration detaches these from a personal perspective and reattaches them to the cinematic space of Berlin. I would like to stress this notion of a distinctly cinematic space, as *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* foregrounds its cinematographic visual matching that allows the viewers to delve into these red-tinted flashbacks. At times, the series cuts between flashbacks and present tense as if Marek could directly see into a past he never witnessed, but which is now ingrained in the cinematic city (Figure 6.2).

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Figure 6.2. Marek's stare onto the empty pavement conjures up images he never saw, but that *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* engrains in its cinematic city space ("Berlin ist das Paradies," 22:37–22:42). Screenshots by Felipe Espinoza Garrido.

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Furthermore, such matches include numerous little convergences and overlaps between Grisha's death and Marek and Stella's presence—for instance, the view down Kopistraße, or a boy running down the street, now echoing young Marek's panicked rush to the scene. These memories of the series *Urtrauma* are primarily space-bound, rather than character-bound, and their resonance throughout the scene emphasizes the everydayness and ubiquity of traumatic resonances as an integral part of the clearly delineated city space. Trauma, this paradigmatic scene suggests, resides in the cinematically encoded pavements, streets, and vistas, rather than in individual memories. In *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*, cinematic Berlin narrates history and historical trauma beyond an individual grasp, allowing its spaces to provide a distancing mechanism from the individual's entrenchedness in their storyworld. As a result, Grisha's murder itself becomes a metaphor for a larger, transgenerational traumatization that is presented as nationally and ethnically divisive.

This prototype flashback—bits and pieces of this murder will be reshown countless times throughout the series—also offers a central allegory for post-reunification insecurity: at the scene of the crime, Marek explains that, as a child, when with his older brother Grisha, he had felt safe, because he saw him as invincible; he felt nothing could harm Grisha. The analogy between *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s Latvian German protagonist and a collectivized East European memory of loss is clear: the surprising fall of the Wall, and the—to many people—shockingly sudden collapse of the Soviet Union as a collective trauma are embodied in Marek, who, as a consequence, decided to become a police officer, now occupying a liminal position. In the criminal context of his family he is a "*Musar*," a derogatory term for the police that roughly translates as "trash." So when Stella confronts his lack of Jewish friends and lack of Russian identity, labelling him as "only a German," and police chief Nico Roeber (Arved Birnbaum) questions his allegiance a few minutes later with the words "You're still mixed up in your tribe [*Sippe*]"—note the outdated racialization of the German "*Sippe*"—the *Wende*-trauma is directly linked to a current hybrid diasporic construction of migrational identity and a lack of belonging.

Mapping Trauma in the Cinematic City

Im Angesicht des Verbrechens's Berlin is immediately recognizable, not only due to the frequent reference to landmarks—the Berlin Television Tower, Ku'damm, the ICC and its prominent radio tower, to name but a

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few—but also in its focus on street signs, the officers' radio communication that often details their specific locations, and its close-ups of map details. Such recognizability necessarily differs for viewers with local knowledge, or lack thereof, and as a consequence the series' imagination of Berlin is both inherently transnational and critically local. This is particularly important as the series hereby performs its rootedness in local city structures for even the most casual (inter)national viewer, grounding its portrayals of crime in realist conventions. At the same time, *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* thus provides ample indicators that allow a local audience to spatially retrace the characters' movements. This is facilitated by the show's use of recurring settings, such as the police station, the so-called *Russendisko*, Marek's apartment, and Mischa's restaurant Odessa, which *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s narrative mode continuously locates within the larger structure of Berlin's cityscape. Graf himself has likened the series' narrative procession to a clock—a circular movement from location to location and thus from storyline to storyline, all across Berlin (see Figure 6.3).[17]

Such local specificity is both emphasized and structured by the show's repeated use of aerial establishing shots. As Britta Hartmann has outlined in detail, there is a link between these shots and the show's investment to locate itself "in a multiracial post-reunification Berlin, with its coexistence of ethnic, cultural, and social milieus," and as such, they fulfill an authenticating function.[18] At the same time, these "rhythmizing, structuring panoramic views" refer the series' individual milieus and storylines back to the city space as the superordinate organizing principle that only becomes tangible in its kaleidoscopic particulars—"Only the totality of the sociotopes existing next to each other forms the macrocosm."[19] If, to Hartmann, these narrative interjections that draw upon Berlin's recognizable post-reunification spatial layout thus act as a guide to the story's distinct yet interlinked stories and milieus, I would like to look at the ways in which *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* contours and comments on the city as ordering system. The notion of "guiding" is instrumental here: In "Rosen fallen vom Himmel" these characteristic aerial nobody's shots are depicted as perspectives from a police helicopter in pursuit of the criminal businessman Heinrich Lenz (Bernd Stegemann) and his son. Here, *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* contextualizes its own ordering system by which the viewers make sense of the city and story alike as an investigative tool of police surveillance. In other words, the episode suggests that all along such interjections and their epistemic functions equate the viewer's perspective with the police's. However, the *Draufsicht* in both its visual aesthetic and its

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Figure 6.3. Aerial establishing shots introduce *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s multiple storylines and spaces (top to bottom: "Berlin ist das Paradies": 16:25, 34:28; "Der Überfall": 45:45; "Rosen fallen vom Himmel": 21:41). Screenshots by Felipe Espinoza Garrido.

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guiding function also evokes the image and function of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s ubiquitous maps, whose overall function is more ambivalent. Maps in *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*, in their digital or analogue forms, are certainly a policing tool, and frequent zooms onto the minutiae of such maps help identify and authenticate settings with even greater precision than the aerial interjections. Even the location of Lenz's illegal cigarette factory in the fictional town of Schnoetzwitz, some sixty kilometers south of Berlin, is mapped out in detail, with real reference points all around (Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.4. Map details as authentication and policing epistemology in "Alles hat seine Zeit," whether real locations around Kurfürstendamm (top: 26:42) or the carefully mapped fictional town of Schnoetzwitz (bottom: 28:41). Screenshots by Felipe Espinoza Garrido.

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These maps are not only intimately interwoven with the series' aerial shots—the Schnoetzwitz map is even used as an establishing shot—but their semanticization and visual arrangement comments directly on the traumatizing hierarchies that *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* has established as the basis of its cinematic post-reunification Berlin. Maps not only help the police solve crimes, they also become the literal background for police work, contextualized, overlaid, and thus visually overwritten and restructured with images of criminality and the show's multiple criminal organizations and branches (Figure 6.5).

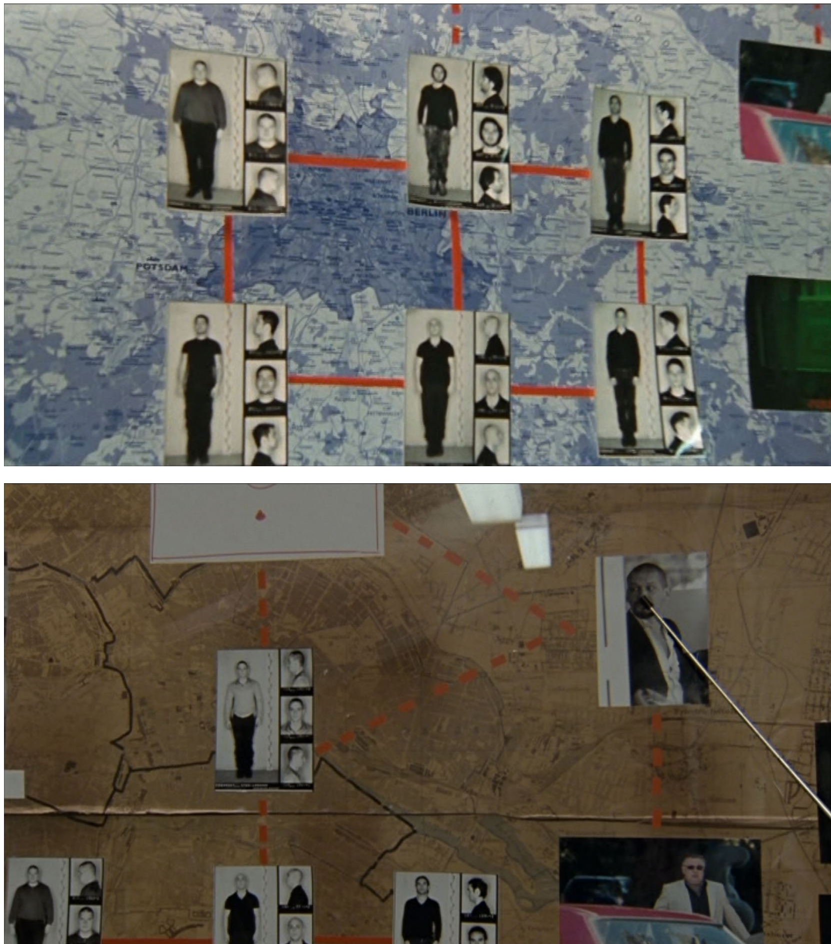

Figure 6.5. Mapping crime in *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* marks new divisions of the city space (top: "Rosen fallen vom Himmel," 48:11; bottom: "Nur ehrliche Liebe ist gute Liebe," 19:33). Screenshots by Felipe Espinoza Garrido.

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Crime and its abstracted, visual connections crisscross and divide the mapped city space, superimposing new visual structures. Nowhere is this more obvious than in one of the series' most intensely debated scenes, Roeber's motivational speech in "Der Verrat," which is worth quoting here:

> These gang bosses, they're all businessmen. They're married. They live like CEOs. But under them, is the old, raw meat. They're greedy, ruthless. In their eyes, it looks like we Germans are a dying breed. We're just their customers: buying women, drugs. We're dumb German money. They're the victors, the proud barbarians. They've inundated the country. They're superior to us in their will to live and their strength.

Set to the series' theme, the scene cuts back and forth between Roeber in front of one such map and the subjects of the speech, officers and criminals. Kathrin Rothemund has argued that the map and the criminal connection it depicts refer to the series' layering of spaces and storylines, which in conjunction with the frequent zooms on the police officers in the room and the criminals creates a "network of relations, which connects the political, economic, and criminal spheres."[20] Rothemund stresses the map's metaphorical use as a guiding system through the complexities of the series' "polycentric narration,"[21] which, akin to Hartmann's reading of the film's aerial interjections, is the result of constant movement between spaces and milieus, characters and storylines, and which is constantly made visible through the presence of maps.[22] Such interconnections, however, are also at play when we consider the speech's references to *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s *Urtrauma*, the "barbaric invasion," to use Roeber's terminology, following German reunification and immigration from Eastern Europe. Focusing on the ethnicizing implications of the speech, Jill Suzanne Smith has outlined how "[w]ith Roeber's monologue, Graf's series gives a voice to contemporary German xenophobic fears by reinvigorating nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anxieties regarding degeneration and invasion,"[23] and thus foreshadows Lottner's eventual belief in German *Überfremdung*. This conflict of identity and belonging once more focuses on the mechanisms by which Germanness is either granted or revoked, claimed or negated, in *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*. What is at stake in the interpretation of Berlin's maps and the visual language they share with the series aerial shots is no less than *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s understanding of spatial and cinematographic organization as structuring devices of a Germanness in the face of its transnationalization.

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The ambivalence between the series' insistence on distinct spaces and spheres—and, as a result, possibly also nationalities—while emphasizing their interconnectedness has been remarked upon.[24] Indeed, likable gangsters who abide by their strict codes, corruption, and the ambivalence of Stella's eventual continuation of her deceased husband's criminal empire, along with Marek's familial involvement with his brother-in-law, certainly point to a general eradication of categorical and normative boundaries in the series. However, it is particularly Roeber's reference to *Fleisch*, the inherently biological, bodily constitution, which to him seems to underpin his demarcation of lawful Germanness and criminal alterity, that proves more troublesome in the series (Figure 6.6). As Smith contends,

> With very few exceptions, the Russian Mafiosi are depicted as lean and muscular fighters (Stella's husband, Mischa, trains in the boxing ring, while his wolfish antagonist Andrej is pictured jogging), while the Germans tend to range from paunchy (the corrupt policeman Hollmann) to obese (the decadent, corrupt investor Lenz is repeatedly called "Fat Lenz").[25]

The comparison between these groups relies on what I have earlier outlined as the series' cinematography of trauma: where in Marek's case, visual convergences map individual traumatic experiences onto the

Figure 6.6. Framing difference in *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* relies on the contrast between allegedly different national physicalities (Left column: "Wo wir sind, ist vorn": 5:21, 4:35; right column: "Der Überfall": 30:30, "Der Verrat": 44:11). Screenshots by Felipe Espinoza Garrido.

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larger canvas of post-reunification Berlin, the same visual comparisons emphasize the police's bodily inadequacy, and as such, the series' biologistic differentiation between the "proud barbarians" and the doomed Germans. As *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s cinematography constantly contrasts these two homogenized and ethnicized national groups—Germans and their East European, Othered counterparts—historical trauma and its appendant loss of control become embodied expressions of cultural difference. Therefore, despite the series' emphasis on structural connections between and across all sorts of porous layers and boundaries, its ambivalent toying with German ethno-nationalism suggests a re-entrenchment of national boundaries and essentialist generalizations about "Germanness" and "Russianness" (which here encompasses Ukraine, the Baltic states, and others in the tradition of the propagandistic Cold War singular use of *der Russe*).[26] This fundamental ambivalence of indulging in overblown clichés as a method of revealing a sense of truth about Othered, marginal actors of society—an ambivalence that Graf as well as scholars acknowledge[27]—is expressed nowhere as clearly as in Roeber's speech. Thus, in the exact moment, in which *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* augurs the essentially destructive aftereffects of German reunification, the overwritten map, a Berlin divided among criminals, thus becomes the emblematic expression of a fundamental trauma. In other words, the trope of bodily inadequacy and the series' intertwined reordering of the city both rely on the same cinematographic trope as trauma: on visual convergences that literally map past ruptures onto the present cinematic city plan. Its pre-1990 historical division into sectors and along national borders is transformed into a no-less-violent separation of spheres.

If we draw these thoughts together, *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* emerges as a highly ambitious project to explore and rephrase German identities in Berlin, a city that the series imagines as a historical nexus that constellates a microcosm of traumatic and often conflicting sensations of belonging and unbelonging. Visually and narratively complex, such pastness in the series is engrained in both the material city space—experience is spatialized and mutable in the city's abstractions through maps—and feeds into Berlin's tableau as a dimension of its cinematography. Despite such cinematic potential for nuanced differentiation, the series' post-reunification Berlin is structurally superseded by new nationalism, and the eradication of one border eventually only brings into sharp focus new spatial divisions, couched in the same visual language: red lines across maps that symbolically prohibit German collectivity. Effectively, thus, *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s "exploring gaze"[28]

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that strafes across its diverse milieus is not transnational in the sense of traversing what Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller have called the investigative prism of "methodological nationalism," which has hegemonically framed both artistic and sociological understandings of migration.[29]

Sense8, Intertextuality, and Global Criminal Landscapes

The Wachowskis' *Sense8* relates the intermingled storylines (and equally intermingled experiences) of eight sensates—*homo sensorium*—an evolved branch of the human species. Birthed into so-called clusters around the world, they share sensory impressions and presences, allowing the protagonists to visit each other telepathically, to help each other, but also to experience each other's emotions and suffering. Alexandro Segade argues in this respect that "[w]hile most television is built on interwoven character arcs, *Sense8*'s characters are woven into one another, . . . representing this slippage among identities."[30] In this sense, the series' basic setup already suggests a more radical take on the notion of cinematic interconnectedness when compared to *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*, even if both stake much of their narrative on reckonings with the past via the links between spatially distinct locales. Where the first season focuses on the sensates' shared overcoming of individual traumata—including transphobic childhood abuse, closetedness, loss of a partner and a newly born daughter in an accident, reckoning with incestuous family histories and patricide—season two foregrounds the cluster's resistance to and eventual victory over the corrupted Biologic Preservation Organization (BPO), forestalling its aim of total control of sensate life. Throughout all of this, *Sense8* borrows heavily from *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*, ostensibly in an attempt to globalize and cosmopolitanize Graf's series' unfulfilled promise of a transnational imaginary anchored in Berlin.

Such connections to *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* go beyond the aforementioned production contexts, as *Sense8* openly articulates its relation to Berlin, national identity, gang wars, and, not least, *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*. This is particularly the case when we consider the series' meta discussions of its own criminal activity. These take place chiefly in two episodes: "Happy Fucking New Year," which outlines the post-*Wende* divisions of Berlin's ganglands, and "Obligate Mutualisms," which contextualizes and ridicules stereotypical imaginations that *Im*

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Angesicht des Verbrechens's writer Rolf Basedow has termed "ethnically organized gangs."[31] Via these episodes, *Sense8* unmasks the realist stylization of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s criminal clichés, while at the same struggling to offer a decidedly more inclusive vision of transnational collectivity.

Sense8's references to *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* are manifold, and draw upon multiple filmic dimensions that are visual, organizational, thematic, and, last but not least, spatial. Season two's opening proves paradigmatic for *Sense8*'s basic referencing strategies. Whereas *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* opens with Jelena's swim in a lake, seeing a vision of Marek, the man she will fall in love with, "Happy Fucking New Year" opens with Kala swimming in the sea and telepathically encountering her love interest, Wolfgang (Figure 6.7).

The scene continues with all other sensates jumping into the sea, diving alongside the lovers, thereby positioning their romantic story arc

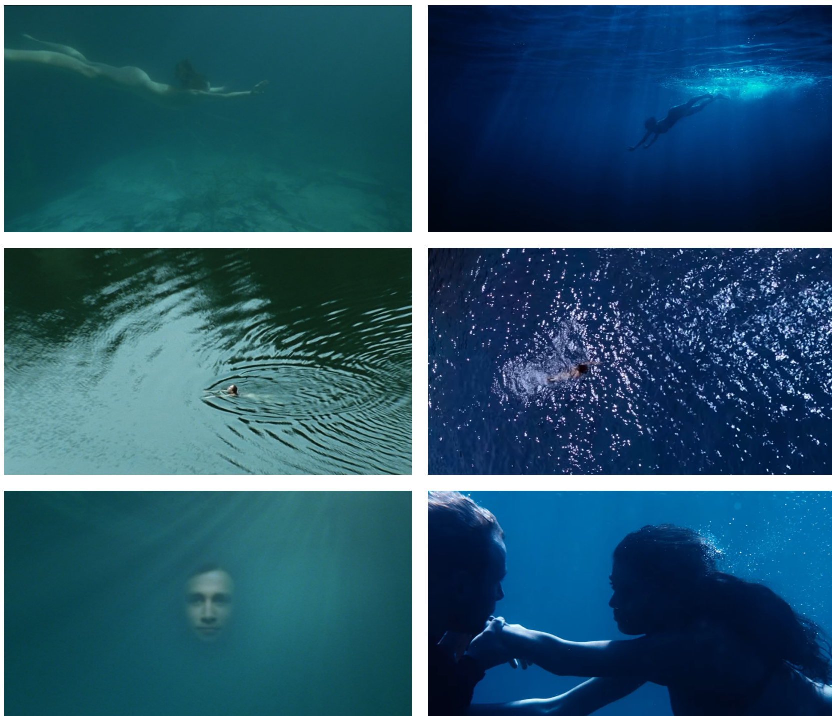

Figure 6.7. *Sense8* mirrors *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s opening shots (left column: "Berlin ist das Paradies": 1:01, 1:28, 2:07; right column: "Happy Fucking New Year," 1:10, 1:41, 2:59). Screenshots by Felipe Espinoza Garrido.

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in an intricate web of relations between the eight sensates. The scene makes visible how *Sense8* relies on a scaled-up, cosmopolitan configuration of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s character- and location-bound storylines. Luis Freijo's description of *Sense8*'s spatiality, for instance, directly speaks to a globalized adaptation of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*:

> [T]he eight protagonists are scattered across the world, bridging the differences that can arise between citizens of far-flung places. Yet, on the other hand, each of these characters rooted locally in a major city—Mexico City, Berlin, Mumbai, Nairobi, Seoul, San Francisco, Chicago, and London/Reykjavik—is narrated through the lens of their respective sensate inhabitant.[32]

Such semblances between the two series are complemented by thematic tropes such as a gangster's funeral,[33] an ongoing gang war in Berlin, and inherited criminal empires, but they also coalesce around Max Riemelt's characters. In her work on transnational German stardom, Erica Carter has outlined how "traveling stars, through a migratory independence that is often bolstered by an exceptionally eroticized star image, destabilize national imaginaries, rendering the boundaries fluid and their body politics insecure."[34] In contrast to other German actors of international renown, such as Matthias Schweighöfer and Daniel Brühl, Riemelt's acting has, throughout his career and in his career-defining roles, embodied such eroticization, with collections of his nude scenes a common find among his international internet fandom. Marek's narratively motivated nakedness in *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*—a moment of transformation[35]—translates seamlessly into both parody and eroticism in *Sense8*: parody, when Wolfgang is jokingly referred to as "Conan" in reference to fellow Germanophone Arnold Schwarzenegger's shirtless international breakthrough; and eroticism when Wolfgang is shown in much-discussed full-frontal shots. If *Sense8* thus seems acutely aware of Riemelt's general international appeal as a German actor, the series also draws upon his *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* role in particular. Despite playing a police officer and a criminal, respectively, *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* and *Sense8* emphasize the familial nature of crime to Riemelt's characters, and embed his respective roles within gang wars that define the fundamental order of Berlin's cinematic city space. In fact, it is productive to read Wolfgang as Marek's intertextual alter ego, acting out Marek's mostly unfulfilled desires and his negated choices. Where Marek's trauma motivates his career as a policeman, Wolfgang's no less traumatic patricide as a boy has him gleefully accepting the challenges and the perks of a life of crime. Where Marek's

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being single is marked as troubling loneliness, Wolfgang's sexual prowess and his indulgence in casual (and not so casual) sex is repeatedly foregrounded. Maybe most importantly, however, Marek's intervention into the criminal (re-)organization of Berlin's city space is predicated on stately justice, not revenge, whereas Wolfgang's primary story is bookended by it. From the tense childhood murder of his abusive father, and the overtly cinematic execution of his violent cousin by rocket launcher, to season one's climactic shootout, in which Wolfgang empties an entire magazine into his uncle's throat for covering up the said childhood abuse against him and his mother—Wolfgang's cruel vendetta, which the series legitimizes by the monstrosity of his father—leaves his family's criminal empire and thus the pre-existing order of Berlin itself in tatters. Considering this chapter's detailed focus on the structuring cartography of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s transnational Berlin and its traumatic connotations, the multiple convergences between the two series beg the questions, then, of how Berlin is mapped in *Sense8*, and furthermore, how the relation between Berlin, its criminal underworld, and the other intersecting storylines is mapped out.

After the death of his uncle, Wolfgang meets with his now-widowed aunt Elke (Marina Weis) when she and her consigliere, Fischer (Douglas Reith), confront him with a map of Berlin's criminal "kingdoms"—a term favored by his aunt for the "nice dynastic ring to it." Much like *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s Stella, who eventually inherits her late husband's criminal empire, Elke as a late "king's" widow is charged

Figure 6.8. Redrawing the map of Berlin ("Happy Fucking New Year": 1:00:33). Screenshot by Felipe Espinoza Garrido.

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with managing it, for fear of a brutal gang war over the now-leaderless territory.

Wolfgang's claim to the symbolic throne in this male-dominated sphere "will forestall more unnecessary bloodshed" and solidify the territorial arrangements mapped out on screen. It is worth noting here that similar motives and similar language of restructuring and reordering is also prevalent in *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s conclusion of the intra-clan warfare. During the final episode's mediation between the warring factions, patriarch Sascha (Ryszard Ronczewski) underlines such a reading in his opening remarks: "There is too much chaos in this city. Too much blood is flowing. . . . If we want to work in peace, order must be restored. But order does not restore itself. We must restore it." In both series, the cinematic map of Berlin, reordered by criminal practices, needs stabilizing. In the case of Wolfgang, his metonymic relation to the city is verbalized directly: "[T]o anyone who understands this map you are still a Bogdanow," implying that his (originally Russian) last name, his heritage, and thereby his narrative arc are vital for *Sense8*'s ordering of Berlin.

Fischer's map, however, is not without its history or trauma, and much like *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*, *Sense8* is at pains to point out German reunification as the point of departure for the city's new order. If the map at hand visually evokes the historical partition of Berlin and its different sectors (note that the East is marked in red, Figure 6.8), these links are further emphasized a little late when Wolfgang and Felix attend West Berlin "king" Volker Bohm's (Martin Wuttke) new year's party on a rooftop next to the Brandenburg Gate. His home, the seat of his criminal empire, Bohm brags, "was built on the site of the very first sector of the Wall that was pulled down," but adds that "the real division, the only one that has ever mattered, was never horizontal. It's vertical." In the very moment that *Sense8* articulates its seemingly *spatial* semantics, the series links these to Berlin's traumatic historical reference point as well. In this context, Bohm's casual dismissal of the Wall's significance and his idealization of his klepto-capitalist achievements speak directly to the show's identification of his West German identity. *Sense8* here consciously comments on its seemingly simplified use of cinematic space: the horizontal division of Berlin into various criminal kingdoms at war with each other; and the vertical, economic stratification that separates the guests at a glitzy rooftop party overlooking Brandenburg Gate from "the losers down there." It does so by highlighting that all of the show's spatial divisions of the city are intimately interwoven with Berlin's political his-

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tory. Along with the map's obvious visual allusions to the city's partition during much of the late twentieth century, *Sense8* thereby evokes an intersecting ordering system that is decidedly temporal, traumatic, and transnational, but which, on the surface level, is negotiated via territorial grievances.

Repeatedly, *Sense8* stresses that its own territorial concerns reflect upon, and are thus once removed from, Graf's series' "mere" focus on transnational (but thematically and spatially contained) crime as a negotiation for German identity. In what we should consider a direct reference, *Sense8* introduces its discussion of Berlin gang wars with an aerial establishing shot of the Reichstag, before one of Berlin's criminal overlords, Sebastian Fuchs (Lars Eidinger), dismissively describes his rivals: "The competition lacks vision. I'm not talking about just stupidity, I'm talking about monkeys banging on typewriters. They smuggle girls from Bosnia or some such place. They rig football games, labor the margins with numbers and drugs. Talentless chicken thieves with pickpocket ambition. . . . Theirs is the old world. It's tribal, it's primitive." Offering an upscale view of the Berlin Cathedral when compared to that from Marek's apartment (Figure 6.9), the milieu Fuchs denigrates is that of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*: provincial feuds by unduly "proud barbarians," whom Fuchs imagines through the lens of racialization and Otherness. Consequently, and as a result of *Sense8*'s embedding of Berlin into its global imaginary, *Sense8*'s hyper-criminals seek to capitalize on the fact that "[m]oney flows into this fine city from all over the planet" instead of merely exploiting "dumb German money." If *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s suppression of gang rivalries is necessitated by local concerns of stability and if this suppression ultimately solidifies notions of distinct national identities, the global scale and the increased cinematic and spatial interconnectedness of *Sense8*'s narrative symbolically indicates that resolving Berlin's territorial disputes will establish a global and, finally, an equitable order. As such, we might argue that *Sense8*'s Berlin plot offers a paradigm for the series' negotiation of transnational interconnectivity and traumatic temporalities underlying each of the eight sensates' backstories. The show's multiperspectivity thus adapts German history as a structure for its intradiegetic interconnectedness.

Andrea Merodeadora has observed the prominent placement of the Berlin episodes, to the point of "Wolfgang's turf war taking up a good half of the screen time even before he is involved in the A-plot."[36] Epitomizing the fact that *Sense8* is highly skewed towards representing its white characters (a fact I will return to later), in the case of the

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Figure 6.9. In contrast to Marek's distant view of the cathedral in the background, narrowly framed by cheap curtains and old windows (top: "Alles hat seine Zeit": 25:16), Wolfgang's access to Berlin's criminal upper echelons and the camera's unrestricted view indicate that *Sense8* scales up *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s limited criminal milieu for a global stage and global audiences (bottom: "Obligate Mutualisms": 27:57). Screenshots by Felipe Espinoza Garrido.

Berlin arc this is, as the structural similarities between *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* and *Sense8* already indicate, also a matter of plotting and narrative causalities.[37] When *Sense8* directly adapts and modulates *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s spatial mapping of ethnic belonging in Ber-

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lin—moving from one space/story to the next—these different spaces are always already multiply inhabited and experienced in *Sense8*. Distinct recurring locales are never separate spaces but, given the sensates' abilities, they are by definition potentially open, interlocked, and in a simple sense transnational, enabling a shared space across national borders through the sensates' abilities. Within this network of perception, *Sense8*'s central utopian ideal of global, borderless, and epistemically uncategorized cohabitation is narratively set in motion in Berlin. When Wolfgang refuses Lila's offer to embrace his inheritance as a Bogdanow crime lord *and* as a sensate (which would include committing genocide against *sapiens* and rule as king of the *sensates*), his reply "This is Berlin. These are my people" emphasizes *Sense8*'s obvious desire to represent a storyworld that moves toward the eradication of boundaries and discriminatory practices and institutions per se. Wolfgang's shared bond with his city and its inhabitants exemplifies that, as Luis Freijo argues, "Wolfgang's arc in S01 has parallels with his city, then, as it consists of liberating himself from his violent family and, in S02, dealing with his heritage."[38] Drawing upon the same basic configurations of Berlin's cinematic city space, *Sense8* ostensibly seeks to deny the ethnic factionalism of Graf's series in favor of a globally shared meta-humanitarianism in the widest sense, transgressing even the boundaries of the human as species.

Conclusion: The City as Resistance?

Reading *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* through *Sense8*'s partial adaptation not only reveals wide-ranging structural similarities in configuring the cinematic imagination of Berlin as post-trauma space, but ultimately also points to some limitations of complexified, highly sophisticated cinematic meaning-making mechanisms that seek to instill a transnational, equitable *form* onto a *histoire* mired in regional particularisms and built on hegemonic power structures and constructions of alterity. In *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*, the story's constant reiterations of ethnic strife and a conscious commitment to nationalist clichés result in the series' multifaceted tensions—between ambitious formal experimentation and detailed realism, but also between a lack of corresponding nuance in negotiating its own categorizations, whether religious or national. By contrast, *Sense8*'s cosmopolitanization and transposition of Graf's ethnicized factions onto a global cast and an equally global narrative makes visible the provinciality of *Im Angesicht des Verbrech-*

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ens's failed transnationalism, while promising to rectify such shortcomings. However, a number of critics have outlined how *Sense8*'s aesthetic inventions and modifications are eventually beset by problems not unlike those of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*. Given cinematic Berlin as the structural and thematic lynchpin for the show's negotiation of traumatic pasts, and offering a systemic roadmap to deconstructing even transhuman boundaries, Cáel M. Keegan's verdict on the ambivalence of *Sense8*'s general narrative tactics is instructive: "*Sense8* thus mobilizes race, gender, and nationality as stereotypic forms of personhood, even as it metanarratively comments on them as constructs—a bimodal strategy the series forces both its characters and audience to straddle."[39] In the same vein, the series' focus on predominately white characters has not only elicited criticism for their white saviorism and the foregrounding of European and US storylines, such as the paradigmatic Berlin episodes, but also for the "reproduc[tion of] the whiteness of liberal humanism that refuses to practically engage with the colonial histories and imperialist gaze that continually produce the non-western other,"[40] as a result of which *Sense8* fails in its *global* transnational utopianism. Tying these internal contradictions back to this chapter's discussion of cinematic Berlin as a structuring agent, it might ultimately well be the city's resistance to being thus ordered and functionalized that can metaphorically account for the show's shared structural limitations.

As such, the cinematic imagination of Berlin in both series allows us to consider some ramifications for transnational German television and for representations of Germany (and German television) in a transnational context. This ties in with Randall Halle's question about post-*Wende* broadcasts—"what has happened to television as a medium for the democratic public sphere?"—and his concerns about the scarcity of "developing and distributing programming for minorities and marginalized groups."[41] While Halle asked this with an eye to the market-oriented professionalization of public broadcast television in Germany vis-à-vis an increase in private corporations' reality television, it remains a pressing concern when we consider the potential of a television culture that is not only transnational in its production contexts, but is a culture that embraces transnationalism's critical potential. Such potential can unsettle the nation state as a central category to understand belonging and its affective attachment, and it does so with a view to plural modes of equitable participation beyond the hegemonic structures of the nation state. Participation in this sense necessarily extends to questions

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of representation, and as such, to transnational television's capacity to decenter the nation as arbiter of self and Other—to aspire to, in Halle's words, a "democratic public sphere" that transcends a narrow understanding of Germanness. Critical transnationalism, then, includes the recognition of "[n]etworks of migrants and transnational cultural and religious connections that lead to other forms of identification than national construction."[42] Neither of the series addressed in this chapter, however, embraces its potential for such a transnational project. In *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*, transnational space is one of conflict and strife, owing to a post-*Wende* Eastern Europe that is limited to histories of crime-oriented emigration, instead of, for instance, histories of transnational reform around the *Wende* that contemporary historiography often stresses as foundational for contemporary German and East European understandings of identity.[43] *Sense8* also cannot come to terms with this notion of transnationalism, as it continuously emphasizes the narrative potential of the Global North and its distinctly recognizable nation states, despite its allegedly equitably interwoven storylines. In thus failing to fulfill their transnational aspirations, however, both series do attest to the structural inextricability of German television in an increasingly transnational, even global entertainment economy. As both series allow us to better understand the inherent tensions brought on by competing notions of the transnational—whether as a critical project or a material fact—we might read them less as cautionary tales of undue ambition, and more as roadmaps to evaluate the inevitable, productive, and continuing transnationalization of both German television and Germany on television.

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Notes

1. For detailed visualizations and explanations of the show's numerous plotlines and events, covering each episode with timecodes, see Schwemann, "Im Angesicht des Verbrechens."
2. *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* won two of Germany's most prestigious television awards, the 2010 German Television Award (Deutscher Fernsehpreis) for best series and best cast, and the 2011 Grimme Award for best fiction format.
3. See Renger, "In the Face of In-Betweenness."
4. See Prager, "Gegenspieler und innere Dämonen," 216, 219–20; Hartmann, "Berlin ist das Paradies," 173–74.
5. For a brief assessment of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*'s status as "quality TV," see Rothemund, "Was kostet Berlin?" 50–53. For further references on the euphoric reception of the Berlinale premiere, see Prager, "Gegenspieler," 217. International competition also played a role in the production process. According to ARTE's commissioning editor, Andreas Schreitmüller, *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* was, in part at least, acquired and funded to remedy a perceived lack of daring and innovative German miniseries compared to recent output in, for instance, the US, UK, Canada, and Israel. Schreitmüller, "Ein Ausschnitt, wie zufällig eingefangen," 248.
6. Griem, "Zwischen deutschem Gesellschaftsroman und *The Wire*," 390.
7. The series' production history of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* is well documented in Sievert, *Dominik Graf*. It is noteworthy that *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* was initially developed for the German private television station Sat.1, who declined after an earlier miniseries by the same production company, Typhoon, had underperformed—incidentally, also due to poor scheduling. See Bullemer, "Von der Herausforderung, es zu Ende zu bringen," 255–56. With a view to the series' production context, ARTE's involvement should not, however, be overstated. Schreitmüller stresses that it was particularly the petitioning of editors at Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR), whose involvement enabled the production. In a transnational perspective, perhaps Graf's first collaboration with the Franco-German broadcaster, *Doktor Knock (oder Der Triumph der Medizin)* (1996), might yield more insights. This loose adaptation of French playwright Jules Romains' 1923 *Knock*, which transposes the setting from rural France to rural Bavaria, certainly caused a stir among the French section at ARTE. Schreitmüller, "Ein Ausschnitt," 245.
8. Halle, "German Film, European Film," 252.
9. Modelled after United Artists, X Filme's founders Stefan Arndt, Wolfgang Becker, Dani Levy, and Tom Tykwer set out with the deliberate aim of producing international films in a variety of locations and languages, but also of embracing Hollywood aesthetics and fusing them neatly into traditional German arthouse style. See Baer, *German Cinema in the Age of Neoliberalism*, 80–82; Halle, *German Film after Germany*, 56–58. Christine Haase describes *Lola rennt* in particular as "Hollywood pleasure without giving up its *Heimat* identity. . . . [A]n apt expression of the *zeitgeist* at the turn of the millennium: the film typifies a growing global tendency for transcultural appropriation and hybridization" (original emphasis). Haase, "You Can Run, but You Can't Hide," 397. Further X Filme productions include international big-budget films like *Cloud Atlas*, but also Michael Haneke's *Das weiße Band* (2009) and *Amour* (2012), as well as the international hit series *Babylon Berlin* (2017–), which has been distributed to over 140 countries to date.
10. Halle, *German Film after Germany*, 55.

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11. Wachowski, Wachowski, and Tykwer, "Wachowskis, Tom Tykwer on *Cloud Atlas*, *Matrix* Sequels, and Out-of-Line Journalists (Q&A)."
12. See, for example, Wachowski and Wachowski, "*Cloud Atlas*: Andy and Lana Wachowski Speak."
13. More recently, Tykwer also worked on the soundtrack to *The Matrix Resurrections* (2021). For a detailed account of Netflix's commissioning practices and *Sense8*, see Lotz, "What's Going On?"
14. Riemelt, "Interview mit Max Riemelt"; Riemelt and Desai, "*Sense8*."
15. Rothemund, "Was kostet Berlin?" 57.
16. Frahm, "Architectures of Images, Avalanches of Memory."
17. Graf, "TV-Serie *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*."
18. Author's translation. Hartmann, "Berlin," 173.
19. Ibid. Here, Hartmann furthermore argues that this particular conception of Berlin is in keeping with the traditional 1920s trope of the "Moloch Großstadt" or "Großstadtschungel." It seems more than fitting that when Walter Ruttmann pioneered aerial shots of the city in *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* in 1927 he could do away with traditional intertitles, as the audience was expected to be familiar with the locations. Sinka, "Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt," 40.
20. Rothemund, "Berlin," 57.
21. Ibid., 58.
22. Ibid., 58.
23. Smith, "Policing the East," 214.
24. See, for example, Hartmann's argument that "the division of spheres, however, does not present itself as a strict separation of 'good' and 'evil,' of 'normality' and 'deviation,' with a clear line of demarcation. Rather, we are dealing with spaces and normative areas that overlap and interpenetrate each other" [author's translation]. Hartmann, "Berlin," 171–72.
25. Smith, "Policing," 214–15.
26. It seems noteworthy that such sentiments reflect the production's overall approach to nation and nationality, reverberating, for instance, through a number of paratexts collected in Sievert, *Dominik Graf*. Composer Florian Van Volxem relates his struggle with Graf's notion of capturing "the Russian soul" [author's translation]. Van Volxem and Rossenbach, "Die Filmkompositionsfalle," 292. Likewise, Graf himself has, in interviews, stressed the essential characteristics of Russian pride, for instance in Graf, "TV-Serie *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*."
27. Graf's own assessment that national clichés "are sometimes right—and most of the time they say nothing at all" [author's translation] is severely complicated when, a few sentences later in the same interview, he compares Russian gangsters' misogyny with German society in the 1960s, implying a narrative of German progress and superiority. See Graf, "TV-Serie." Furthermore, scholarly criticism's attempts to see *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* as a map to allegedly unknown spheres of Berlin's new post-reunification reality have come under scrutiny for their lack of differentiation, as in Smith, "Policing," 207–8.
28. Hartmann, "Berlin," 178.
29. Wimmer and Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism." One might contrast this approach with that of *4 Blocks* director Marvin Kren, who had initially planned to stage *4 Blocks* in the vein of *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*, as a more traditional police series. As Kren himself has explained, however, the series' producer, Anke Greifeneder, "wanted to change the point of view and tell the story from the perspective of an Arab family. This allowed me to dive deep into the lives of my characters—other-

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wise the view of Neukölln would always have remained that of a stranger" [author's translation]. Kren, "Die Straße ist die beste Schauspielschule."
30. Segade, "We Belong."
31. Author's translation. Basedow, "*Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*."
32. Freijo, "*Sense8* and the City," 141.
33. Such funerals are staged in *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens*, "Alles hat seine Zeit," and *Sense8* (season one, episode one), "Limbic Resonance."
34. Carter, "Transnational Stars," 127.
35. See, for example, Lenz, "Urelemente und Milieu," 212–13.
36. Merodeadora, "The Problem With *Sense8*."
37. Wolfgang's refusal sets in motion the key events that structure the remainder of season two: his betrayal by Lila Facchini (Valeria Bilello), his subsequent abduction and liberation in Naples, and the cluster's eventual defeat of the BPO. It is via the Berlin storyline that the second season's antagonist, Lila and thereby other sensate clusters are introduced, and at the very end, it will be Lila's shunned boss and Berlin crime lord, Sebastian Fuchs, who furnishes Wolfgang with the weapons to literally bring her and the BPO down.
38. Freijo, "*Sense8*," 144.
39. Keegan, "Revisiting the Cluster," 223. For a comparable problematization of how, as Keegan argues with respect to the Wachowskis' C*loud Atlas*, the "impulse to use trans* to evacuate race illustrates how the Wachowskis' work, which often engages trans* to explore racial hybridity and cross-racial encounter, may simultaneously activate preexisting racist logics," see Keegan, *Lana and Lilly Wachowski*, 91, see also 90–100.
40. Asante, Baig, and Huang, "(De)politicized Pleasures."
41. Halle, *German Film after Germany*, 176.
42. Wimmer and Glick Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism," 598.
43. See, for example, Harrison, *After the Berlin Wall*.

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PART III

The Transnationalization of German Cultural History

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Chapter 7

Producing Denationalizing Television

The Netflixization of the New Berlin City Genre in *Dogs of Berlin*

Benjamin Nickl

Berlin Neo-Noir: From National Historicity to City Ambience of Capital Crime

A new German stream screen production has emerged over the past ten years: Berlin city fictions. These fictions that replicate Berlin on the stream screen have managed to fuse elements of two blockbuster genres that dominate popular screen entertainment in the twenty-first century: Scandinavian neo-noir crime and the essentials of big city fiction. This inter-genre balancing act is the focus of my chapter,[1] in which I ask how and to what effect the producers of *Dogs of Berlin* (2018–) merge the neo-noir wave of Scandinavian crime drama with components of productions that feature the world's capital cities as characters alongside the cast. To this end, I will mobilize the mix of aesthetic and narrative styles that viewers know from the Icelandic series *Karppi* (Deadwind, 2018–21), *Ófærð* (Trapped, 2015–), and *Brot* (The Valhalla Murders, Netflix, 2019–20), and the popular Danish series *Broen* (The Bridge, 2011–18). Further elements that inform my discussion appear frequently in the way that *Sex and the City* (1998–2004) presents a turn-of-the-millennium Big Apple, *Mad Men* (2007–15) features a vintage New York, and *Emily in Paris* (2020–) displays the capital of France as a modern metropole at the heart of Europe. The new Berlin city genre encompasses elements of the two genres, "crime noir" and "big city," to create the neo-noir-metropole allure of productions like *Dogs of Berlin*. As I will argue here, transnational audiences can consume this allure as something that looks distantly international but feels immediately close and comfortably familiar in what one could term "ambience entertainment" or "stream globals."

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I refer to this on-demand phenomenon of ambience entertainment as "Netflixization." The Netflixized neo-noir Berlin can manipulate our emotional relationship to content that is meant to feel historically German and authentically national, but clearly is neither. Hence, the city that appears in *Dogs of Berlin* caters to audiences' tastes for intimate familiarity with what they experience on a global online platform.[2] At the same time, *Dogs of Berlin*'s version of Berlin city incentivizes viewers to invite an international screen aesthetic via digital streaming into their homes or onto their tablets and smartphone screens. This points to a curious development in the economy of Video on Demand streaming. As they provide their audiences across the world with experiments in transnational production, global streamers such as Netflix hide unfamiliar fusion formats under the guise of emotional familiarity. It is a process that seeks to make the emperor's new clothes feel pleasantly old by uprooting specific content from its individual national and sociocultural contexts. That content then gets embedded into the generic form and the successful formula of attention models that were tried and tested by the aforementioned metropole and crime noir series.[3] It is a form of emotional transfer and transferability of feeling that is at play here, one which readies contemporary Germanness for global Netflix consumption in a multibillion-dollar attention industry.[4]

However, because there are different kinds of shows with different aesthetics and structures, I do not think it productive to equate Netflixization with standardization; even though one could argue that what we are dealing with means to make "Germanness" palatable across the board to millions of audiences in all the countries that can access Netflix. But, as I will show with a case study of Netflix Global Germany's series *Dogs of Berlin*, the new Berlin city genre necessarily entails *specific* German form, substance, and action. There are particular histories and certain landmark sites, and distinct events and communal identities. They all require scrutiny as a contextualized structure within a purposeful constellation of content elements. This means that the series that fall into a popular stream genre at the intersection of drama, neo-noir, and the city of Berlin as its main locus, share a denationalizing quality, which transforms Berlin into the invaluable anchor that secures the new Berlin city fictions to two of the four regimes of mediated screen attention. Boullier describes these broadly as the regimes of *loyalty* and *immersion*.[5] They play an essential part in our current era of attention scarcity due to an overabundance of popular screen culture. Or, to put all this in the vocabulary of popular culture and stream screen theory, we are dealing here with the regimes of *fandom* and *binge-watching*.[6] As

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an example of a new stream-TV entertainment model, the new Berlin city fiction I am dealing with in this chapter seeks to secure a place for its contemporary Germanness in those two regimes.

Dogs of Berlin's narrative features and transnational aesthetic demonstrate how this is done. Both the story and its styling create a transtemporal and translocal stream screen Germanness, which codes an *everywhere Berlin* as the *anywhere Germany*: the city becomes nation, and Berlin becomes Germany. From such a position onward, one may go further and reflect on the streaming ecology that houses the new Berlin city genre that in turn houses this new Berlin. How has streaming helped this new Germanness to carve out a space for itself? And, how did it create a terrain for popular productions where new forms of "stream Germanness" can be consumed and discussed widely outside of their original German production context on the back of vehicles such as *Dogs of Berlin* and its screen cousins, *Babylon Berlin* (2017–), *Deutschland 83/86/89* (2015–20), *Charité* (2017–), *Berlin Station* (2016), *Ku'damm 56/59/63* (2016–21), *Counterpart* (2017–19), *4 Blocks* (2017–19), and *Sense8* (2015–18)? Such questions require reflection on the authentic Germanness that Netflixized metropole fictions like *Dogs of Berlin* retain. What does this Germanness look like vis-à-vis the popular crime noir and big city template, and how is it reworked for stream consumption across the world? For while the fusion format allows German television series to circulate worldwide as global entertainment that is popular and marketable, it also makes these series shed their historicity and thereby their realness and originality.[7]

The quo vadis of transnational Germanness on demand guides my thinking, with contributions on the consumption of screen content and its bundling via streaming providers in Mareike Jenner's *Binge-Watching and Contemporary Television Studies* assisting me in figuring out this new and unresolved puzzle. The timely collection of think pieces in this edited volume suggests that the era of stream productions comes with a new screen-content-consumption phenomena. Glebatis Perks, for one, discusses the effects of non-gapped episode content as a viewing condition of the streaming audience,[8] while Stolz investigates the impact of the "cultural binge"[9] on clear-cut divisions between traditional screen content labels, such as national and domestic productions. Again, related to another issue of transnational viewing, Watts proposes that stream binge consumption requires a whole new paradigm for screen researchers and scholars of popular media circulation to conceive of national television as a transnational screen experience. The streaming experience, he writes, can approximate the experience

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of immersive cinema.[10] It can do so because the binge's affective overload makes up for the size of the smaller screen, be it laptop, tablet, or phone. All this suggests that stream content productions and their new modalities of consumption exceed our knowledge of traditional television. They deliver a novel cinematic immersion in our post-network and readily available, hyper-affective televisuality of transnationalizing genre narratives.[11] The new Berlin city fiction genre lives in this immersive experience space of stream cinema.

But what about the bigger picture here (pun intended)? What are the off-screen implications for the hyper-affective binge viewings of cities like Berlin, when these cities turn into precarious national miniatures and reductive consumer goods that are today more readily available than ever before in the history of popular entertainment?[12] Key considerations that matter for such concerns include the influence that streaming has on current German culture. Central as well is the relationship between viewer and content. Another core issue relates to what it takes to make contemporary Germanness more *streamable*. I may hence phrase these questions about the relevance of contemporary screen culture and German sociohistorical representation even more poignantly: What does it mean for contemporary German culture and those living out Germany's social realities in the wake of the country's real histories, if this new Berlin becomes what one may call a *Puppenhaus der Nation* [dollhouse of the nation]?[13] What happens to Germany when the country turns into a plaything for the screen world that distances the social realities of Germanness from audiences rather than (im)mediating them, making them less real instead of more? I will make this case in the concluding section, with brief reference to the pioneering media criticisms of Adorno's and Krakauer's contemporary, Günther Anders.

As a matter of analytical process, I should stress that the Netflixization of German culture via the Berlin city genre is a twin practice. One can refer to this formula as the procedural mechanics of transnational German stream entertainment. It consists of a duality of content production and content consumption. I will focus more on the nature of the first by describing *Dogs of Berlin* as a relevant stream culture artifact, and by embedding the series in a theoretical framework of transnational fusion culture and city-space scholarship. I will reflect on the specific characteristics of the latter, namely the consumption of denationalized Berlin TV as German city fiction, by drawing on Anders' theory of the mediation of our modern world through screens as world-experience interface.[14] That theory holds that mediation technologies reduce all

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mediated experience to mere templates of the real, and thus distance us from objective reality the more we consume the allegedly authentic representation. In brief, the irony is that the more we see of Germany on screen, the less we actually see—or want to see—of Germany in objective reality. Such a theoretical understanding of media production and consumption spells out a warning that technologies that mediate reality trick us into believing that we consume the real thing, no matter how denationalized or otherwise "de-realized" that representation may be.

My overarching concern in this chapter, therefore, is to examine how transnational streaming as a cultural technology is processing Germanness under the umbrella concept of new Berlin city fictions, and what that does to us, the viewers. It is all about adding new knowledge about the role that Video on Demand plays in contemporary television studies, and how streaming mediates cultural knowledge between the natural world and the viewer of that world's representation.[15]

Netflix Noir's Berlin

The process that transforms Berlin into a denationalized stream reality is complex, but we can explore aspects of this process by turning first to *Dogs of Berlin*'s narrative and the fusion of neo-noir crime and big city. In *Dogs of Berlin*, it is Berlin's "Pervasive Crime" main plot that grounds the story. The show's introduction reveals, with a gruesome murder, that crime is ubiquitous in this dark version of Berlin. The viewer finds out during the first episode of season one, which consists of ten episodes in total, that a Turkish-German soccer player by the name of Orkan Erdem (played by Cino Djavid) was brutally killed only days before a big match in which Germany were to play Turkey. News of this atrocious act sends Berlin into a frenzy, as interethnic tensions in the city come to a boiling point, and the list of potential suspects lurking in the shadows of Berlin's ganglands is long. It could have been a hate crime committed by members of a group of neo-Nazis from the Marzahn borough of Berlin; the Arab Mafia rules this neighborhood in which the victim grew up, and where Erdem violated gang law by playing clean and refusing bribes to facilitate insider betting. Then there are militant Turkish nationalists who had a motive because they hated the rising soccer star for playing for Germany instead of Turkey. To complicate the issue even more, Erdem could have been killed by random soccer fans, or by hitmen sent by the Berlin Mafia.

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We do not know the real Berlin as well as we think. Watching this show will help us understand the big city's dark underbelly better and help us solve the case. This sense of exploration, of finding out more about the unknown elements of a Germanness in the country's capital city that we think we already know so well, forms *Dogs of Berlin*'s narrative premise. Guided by the question of who killed the promising young Turkish-German soccer player at the height of his career, the creators of the show present us with a story of captivating unfamiliarity. It equates denationalization with defamiliarization. On this story's back, intricate narrative strands about the Germany-we-know-yet-do-not-know unfold. The premise of Berlin as a crime noir metropolis also allows elements of other TV genres—often dealing with ethical, social, and political issues—to surface in this big city crime drama's primordial mystery. To move the whodunit storyline along as it competes with the series' local "Berlin Culture Clash" plot and a national "Nazi History" plot, we encounter one of the two protagonists of *Dogs of Berlin*: a middle-aged German police detective called Kurt Grimmer (played by Felix Kramer; see also the outline of a male figure centered in the frame of Figure 7.1).

Shortly after Grimmer's introduction, the series' showrunner Christian Alvart pairs him with fellow homicide detective Erol Birkan (played by Fakhri Yardim, see Figure 7.2), a by-the-book Turkish-German police officer whom the chief of Berlin's capital city police force orders to co-head Erdem's murder investigation. All this happens in a lavishly pro-

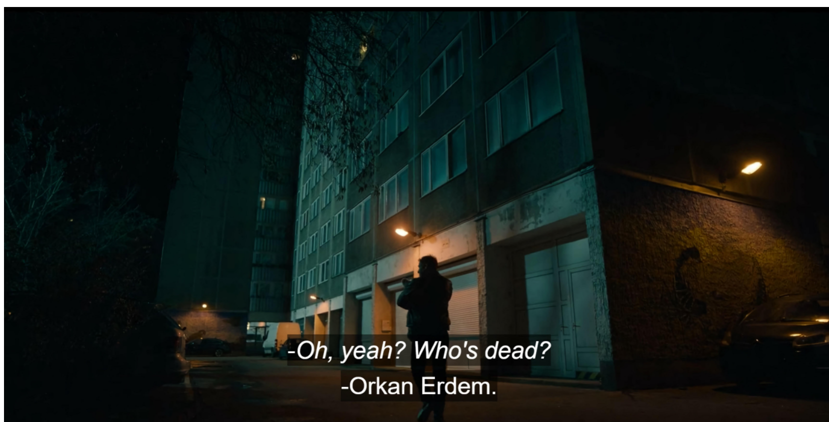

Figure 7.1. Felix Kramer as police detective Kurt Grimmer, kicking off the murder-mystery plotline that underpins the series. *Dogs of Berlin*, season one (2018). Screenshot by Benjamin Nickl.

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Figure 7.2. Fakhri Yardim as police detective Erol Birkan, who co-heads the homicide investigation into Orkan Erdem's murder, and who lives in two worlds. *Dogs of Berlin*, season one (2018). Screenshot by Benjamin Nickl.

duced style that justifies the high production costs for the single-camera show, and for which Netflix commissioned Alvart's Berlin-based production company, Syrreal Entertainment.[16]

But not everything about this noir version of Berlin is new. What we experience as we delve into *Dogs of Berlin*'s version of Germany's capital city should be familiar terrain to crime drama fans. Season one opens with imagery, sites, and sounds that the global TV fandom of so-called Nordic noir is intimately acquainted with. Creeber provides a useful summary of those features that derive from a format also known as the Scandi crime noir genre, writing that:

> Nordic Noir is best understood as a broad umbrella term that describes a particular type of Scandinavian crime fiction, typified by its heady mixture of bleak naturalism, disconsolate locations and morose detectives. Broadly speaking, it has been described as a cross between the British Golden Age of crime writers like Dorothy L. Sayers and Agatha Christie with the American hard-boiled private detective stories of Raymond Chandler and the police procedurals of Ed McBain. It first became [popular] in the 1960s with the ten-part series of novels by Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö, featuring Inspector Martin Beck. This Marxist-inspired fiction introduced social criticism as an important element of the genre, a tradition that has continued to the present day with Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* (2005–9) trilogy, now made into a series of films beginning with *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.[17]

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Figure 7.1 illustrates that very definition of Nordic noir. The opening shots of *Dogs of Berlin* introduce the Netflix viewer to the nitty-gritty setting of inner-city Berlin. Overall, it is a contemporary look. Bleak, dark night scenes blend in with broody gray locales and desolate-looking concrete high-rises. The camera lingers with its dreary panning shots on cracked-up concrete structures, old streets, and shabby sidewalks. Police sirens cut through the night and accompany a montage of panorama shots that feature deserted buildings in dire need of upkeep. We look at these architectural structures from the bottom-up through unnatural side-view angles under the eyeline, which makes the city read as imposing and dangerous. The dwarfing of the human viewpoint vis-à-vis the existence of the metropole is a staple of crime drama's aesthetic, so that the big city of Berlin feels uninvitingly cold and threateningly anti-human in both sonic and visual styling. Cinephiles may recognize that *Dogs of Berlin*'s angular geometry, and how the series features buildings in the city as imposing entities that reinforce a repelling sensation, borrows from the stylistic repertoire of Fritz Lang's iconic 1927 production *Metropolis* (see Figure 7.3).

Yet again, structures, textures, and angles are not all that places *Dogs of Berlin* in the world of crime noir metropoles. Alvart's series prominently features that dimly lit aesthetic that made Nordic noir dramas so famous: "Hence the implicit reference to film noir that is matched by a slow and melancholic pace, multilayered storylines and an interest in

Figure 7.3. The imposing might of the mega-city appears to the viewer in a panoramic crosscut of the big city as an artificial and eerie landscape. Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927). Screenshot by Benjamin Nickl.

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uncovering the dark underbelly of contemporary society."[18] It is quite certainly in this tradition of a dark and bleak city-drama-fiction genre, as my point about the visual legacy of Lang's German city cinema suggests, that we encounter *Dogs of Berlin*'s metropole "Germanness" on Netflix's stream screen. This is a century after German visual artists such as Lang, and German literary artists such as Alfred Döblin, introduced audiences to the big city and to Berlin as a backdrop for what it means to live an urban life in modern society. As its plotlines unfold, *Dogs of Berlin*'s murderous narrative and the excesses of violence, corruption, and betrayal in each episode confirm the noir concept of big city crime. Netflix's stream representation of Berlin shows us a space—a whole ecology—of sociopsychological violence in which we would not be surprised to hear of organized crimes or criminal activities in which all the characters participate. We find ourselves in a setting that suggests that what is done in darkness may not be savory, but it surely will not prompt questions as to whether something is too good to be true, as was the case in harmonious and bright-eyed big city multicultural fictions set in Berlin city in the late 2000s.[19] Rather, the opposite may be true: is *Dogs of Berlin*'s transnational crime noir image of Berlin too brutal to be real, to be convincingly and credibly German?

It is in this arena of a German-Nordic fusion genre that *Dogs of Berlin*'s Netflix detectives go to work. Although questionable at first, the Grimmer and Birkan pairing is the right move as the viewer finds out in episode two. Grimmer has a severe gambling addiction. His debts force him into the pocket of crime kingpin Tomo Kovač, leader of the Croatian Kovač clan that rules the legal and illegal gambling and betting businesses in Berlin. Grimmer also entertained ties to, and is still in contact with, an underground neo-Nazi cell in Marzahn, which his white-supremacist mother and brother run. It is here that Birkan joins the investigation to work the Erdem case with Grimmer, which creates a conflict crucial to the two protagonists' character development. Birkan is an openly gay man with an observant Muslim father who vehemently rejects the way his son lives his life. His close collaboration with Grimmer intensifies Birkan's identities—gay/Muslim, Turkish/German—around the question of which part of Berlin, and thereby of German society, he wants to live in, and whose rules he wants to follow. Grimmer, in return, confronts the ethical issues that arise from his off-duty life and his ties to German right-wing extremists.

This is, however, not a *Sherlock* (2010–17) or a *Lethal Weapon* (1987, 1989, 1992, 1998) scenario where both men teach each other valuable lessons in the context of a cop-buddy drama. What we have here are two

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police officers of equal rank. Next to the more obvious good cop/bad cop paradigm,[20] Grimmer and Birkan bring vastly different skills and lived experiences in "Germany as Berlin" and "Berlin as Germany" to the investigation. Their unlikely pairing sets them immediately at loggerheads, which their vastly different personalities further compound. The way that they experience and navigate Berlin's city spaces and their clashing identity markers all add tension. Grimmer is a corrupt police officer whose choices make his life spiral out of control. Birkan plays by the rules but is frustrated to find that playing by the rules and being the good son gets him nowhere. Their collaboration, therefore, forced as it may be, makes for a formidable arc of introspective character development in both men. Birkan has a corrective influence on Grimmer, while Grimmer's behavior prompts Birkan to embrace moral ambiguity instead of judging all that he experiences in the city of Berlin as either black or white. The result is an entertaining pedagogy of progress, with the two protagonists updating each other's Germanness despite certain growing pains. One may argue that the promotional artwork (see Figure 7.4) that foreshadows this "personal growth" plotline as an interface thumbnail on the Netflix selection feed confirms as much. The thumbnail is a reworked still image from episode nine of *Dogs of Berlin* that shows the two detectives bruised yet positioned closer to each other than they ever were in the first six episodes of the series.

Progress may not always be desirable or easy. But it is necessary for a diverse society such as Germany to evolve by fusing all its different segments and realties. Light must merge with dark. Episode eight

Figure 7.4. Crime noir's tried-and-tested trope of the two detectives working the same case. *Dogs of Berlin*, season one (2018). Screenshot by Benjamin Nickl.

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delivers this message about the need for transnational German society to evolve beyond its sociohistorical limitations so everyone can progress, and move on, and live in the gray zone that their shared new reality *actually* is. Here, one's assumptions about the worst elements of society give way to the mundane in-between, allowing us to see things as inconspicuous third spaces waiting for us to explore them. As *Dogs of Berlin*'s detectives realize, evil does not reside in the exceptionally extreme, but in the terrifyingly ordinary. Shortly before the tensions caused by Erdem's murder explode into a massive fight scene between soccer hooligans and a group of neo-Nazis in episode nine, the series unveils an elderly German man by the name of Albert Meiser (played by Bernd Michael Lade) as the real murderer of the Turkish-German soccer player. Meiser found himself disoriented after the dissolution of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the fusion of East and West Berlin. The GDR's rule of law made sense to him, but this new, reunified Germany and the way it works confused Meiser. The way that neo-noir Berlin's gangs make their own laws appalled him. So did members of the Turkish-German community that now live in Berlin as Meiser's next-door neighbors. Banal as it seems, Meiser killed Erdem over Erdem's dog fouling Meiser's backyard. This, explains Meiser to a bewildered Grimmer, was in reaction to Erdem's "foreign" intrusion of his "German" territory, and to defend his way of Germanness, which he felt was under threat from the Other.

A hate crime committed by an ordinary person sets in motion a series of extraordinary acts of hatred and violence. Grimmer and Birkan could only have stopped the chain reaction that Erdem's murder sets off if they had applied a bird's eye view to the myriad forces at work and the identities at play in the big city in time to find the right point to intervene. *Dogs of Berlin*'s narrative design delivers this lesson with its crime noir investigators, channeling what they learn and uncover about a big city's confronting reality through the eyes of Grimmer's "old" Germanness and Birkan's "new, postmigrant" Germanness, both of which collide with each other as well as internally. The truth about contemporary Germany lies somewhere in between past and present. The conflicts that could lead us to resolution of some kind are far from resolved; or so the show points out to us visually as the credits of episode ten roll, and the showrunner sets up a cliffhanger for season two.

In this respect, the complexity of multi-storytelling in *Dogs of Berlin*'s big-city-crime setting not only represents very different sides of policing, but the convergence of a host of diametrically opposed types of moral and ethical codes; different kinds of Germanness and German

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sociohistorical developments coming to the fore and clashing across time and space. Take, for instance, the issue of reunification, which Meiser's character references. He stands in for *Ostalgia* and East–West German conflict, as well as the growing divide between social prosperity and economic welfare in various parts of the country. Then there are geopolitical realities and societal problems that Germany faces as a nation in objective reality, and that the Netflix stream screenshots within its reproduction of Berlin city's noir world: racism, xenophobia, culture wars, class wars, Islamophobia, homophobia, addiction, crime, extremism, toxic masculinity, a surge in neo-Nazi activities, and a rise of the alt-right in politics. Crime in Berlin, more than anything else, connects to the phenomenon of immigration to Germany. But any chance of harmonious integration dies with Canberk, Birkan's mentor, who seeks to broker a peace between rival gangs and the German authorities in the police no-go zone next to Marzahn. Of course, it is an "eerie coincidence" that all these realities and timelines would cross and intersect. How likely is it that Grimmer and Birkan, four gangs and their respective crime ring leaders, ethnic communities, people of diverse cultural backgrounds, age groups, languages, and social classes, neo-Nazis, and soccer hooligans all encounter each other at the very same point in time and in the very same place, in late 2010s Berlin, over the murder of a young man?

The answer would have to be "not very" if we were dealing with another genre. Yet the unlikely convergence of so many divergent life stories in the city world of Germany's capital is a trademark feature of Nordic noir. With the noir crime genre and the way it designs places to gather a world of different stories, histories, cultures, and languages in the same location, denationalization and dehistoricization are a given. According to Creeber, noir means a drama of destinies that drives modern longform narratives.[21] With crime noir, the unlikely, the untimely and the improbable frequently feature together in the same place and at the same time. Waade describes the idea of translocalized destiny as the noir nexus that forces all plotlines to intersect in a city or village or midsize town. These locations as focal points, as unavoidable places of fate, are therefore always present. The dialogue, the diegetic and non-diegetic sounds, and the visuality of the screen actions and background landscapes must evoke these points of convergence constantly, so that all characters and their lives will be—and more importantly feel—present for the viewer in the noir location. Nowhere is Nordic noir's influence on modern fusion genres in contemporary entertainment TV more pronounced than in this aspect of big city crime as one's inevitable

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fortune. Being bound by the fates to the same place is a neoromantic reaction to the Nordic cultures' melancholic yearning for connectivity.[22] So it is no coincidence that one place, one visual screen canvas, bears out everything that happens. Location is after all central to the bleak project of crime drama serials, and not only for production contexts as I have already indicated them. A noir place also guides the search for meaning amidst a landscape of grim, gloomy, and barren lives that tortured characters experience while navigating the sheer breadth of social problems and overpowering isolation of postmodern existence.

The fate-as-place concept, as exemplified by *Dogs of Berlin*'s unavoidable clash scene in episode ten, may sometimes work on a level beyond all human rationality and otherwise realistic rules of the narrative universe.[23] But it is noir's extremely emotional "destiny philosophy" that the scholarship suggests is what makes viewers gravitate that much towards the genre. We want our screen narratives to reassure us that there is a meaning for us, and that the place we live in holds this meaning. However, just how effective this aesthetic is in attracting viewers to the crime noir–big city fusion genre, and what it means for streaming allegedly authentic images and sounds of Berlin as a denationalized screen production of national Germanness, presents of course another issue entirely. And it is to this question that I turn next, for what is happening in front of the screen *while* we watch is only one part of the denationalizing stream story. What is happening *because* we watch is quite another.

Streaming Germany's Cultural Spaces

Netflix announced late in October 2021 that the streaming giant was changing the way it calculated and reported on viewership trends and rankings such as "most-watched" and "top-ten."[24] To date, Netflix, without any third-party or otherwise independent corroboration, had measured viewership as the number of its paid subscribers who had watched at least two minutes of a TV series or a movie. For instance, 142 million subscribers consumed at least two minutes of *Squid Game* during the Korean drama's first four weeks of availability in the streaming feed. This measure made it Netflix's biggest and most-viewed original series by far. Moving forward, Netflix announced a change during the company's third-quarter earnings call, saying it would report viewership for new originals as a total of hours watched by all member accounts. According to Netflix co-CEO and chief content officer Ted Sa-

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randos, the streaming platform implemented this revised approach to provide "a slightly better indicator of the overall success of our titles."[25] Additionally, the company stated, "we will start to release title metrics more regularly outside of our earnings report so our members and the industry can better measure success in the streaming world."[26] Given that Netflix and other streaming providers received criticism for the lack of transparency around their streaming figures and the accuracy with which these corporations track their catalog titles, cast and crew unions welcomed any change that would make it easier for them to negotiate contracts and adjust payouts based on the success stats of shows. The two-minute metric had arguably been confusing, and it clearly risked misrepresenting the true success of a series or film.

I raise this question about how we measure popularity, and how we keep track of what viewer-users choose and keep choosing to see, because it matters. Primarily, it matters in a study of the new Berlin city genre's production culture, which questions how popular denationalized Germanness is with stream audiences, and asks what the consumption of noir Berlin does to the viewers. Here we find again that the red thread of space-place-screen scholarship that weaves throughout this chapter fosters an understanding of the perception of Germanness as transnational stream content. There is a relationship between platform space and the willingness and eagerness of so-called account holders to consume reproduced screen spaces such as the city of Berlin. What is at stake when these stream Berlins turn into entertaining screen fillers for millions? What would be the consequence of 142 million users watching *Dogs of Berlin*, if only for two minutes? Which truths and realities about German culture and contemporary Germanness would stick with them after watching 248 million minutes, or roughly 540 years, of Berlin noir content that shows them an image of Berlin teeming with crime and complex introspection? Could the experience of real Berlin even compete with such an avalanche of hyper-affective stream attention for the storyline of a former Nazi and a gay Turkish-German police officer? It is not for nothing that the past two decades of German screen studies scholarship have led us to a critical transnational screen aesthetic that seeks to answer questions like this about popular screen production and platform consumption.[27] This field, which grew out of distinct strands of TV, cinema, live-stage performance culture, and online entertainment streaming concerns itself now, more than ever, with popular perceptions and receptions of Germanness across the world, and as I do in this part of my discussion about how Netflix "Netflixized" German culture through Berlin noir.[28]

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Rather than keeping a narrowing focus on the national perception and the national market, I follow the lead of recent production studies that deal with the attention that viewers pay to transnational entertainment, and the question of what makes for quality TV on streaming platforms.[29] This is not to say that the inside of the nation has become inconsequential—quite the opposite, as I have already shown with *Dogs of Berlin*'s distinct turn to the national stories, sights and sounds of its neo-noir Berlin, recent German history, and transnational migration. But a consensus seems to have formed among screen media scholars around the need to know more and to venture beyond that level of narrative analysis and intranational consumption. Thinking about the stream-content-popularity model outside the nation in dialogue with ideas about transnational screen consumption helps us comprehend the shape of a quickly burgeoning phenomenon such as the new Berlin city genre. The critical analysis of a Berlin Netflixized for the streaming screen adds not only to fields of German history and screen studies, communication science, and digital media, but, by cutting across film, TV, and literary studies, it also adds to the latest developments in the lore of spatial turn scholarship in cultural studies.[30] To locate the place of German culture in the global stream is a formidable challenge.

How German Is It *Really*?

So what do we know about the production of popular German content, the streaming screen experience, and Netflix, and where does *Dogs of Berlin* fit into this triangulation? How do viewers embrace the mediated imagination of Berlin crime drama? Do they pay attention to its realness or question its narrative authenticity? To answer these questions, one should first note that Netflix US, as the parent company of Netflix German Global that commissioned *Dogs of Berlin* as part of its original production titles, has produced and distributed an extraordinary amount of original content since 2012. This includes documentaries, variety shows, and feature films. Yet it is Netflix's original scripted television series that interest screen studies researchers and TV culture critics the most.[31] I too suggest that the mediatization of fictional German content on streaming platforms holds valuable clues to Berlin as a transnational production site of what Huyssen calls urban miniatures of the German imaginary. When comparing Kracauer's scattered literary representations of the city with those in Benjamin's *Einbahnstraße*, Huyssen writes of them "as an experimental literary space to test new

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metropolitan perceptions in the context of the breakdown of boundaries between the visual and the verbal arts and the rise of new technological image media."[32] How else would we continue the popular production and reception narrative of German screen history, from the Tempelhof Studios to DEFA to Studio Babelsberg to Netflix Global, if not by tracing the use of popular Berlin screen productions as long-standing cultural technology to mediate Germanness for millions, first on page and now on screen?

New Berlin city fictions are now circulating digitally in the billions across the globe. They move around in the shape of popular metropole stories that keep finding their way directly into the homes and onto the screens of viewer-users. These screen miniatures tell stories of Berlin's Bloody May in *Babylon Berlin*. They depict peak Cold War tensions between East and West, and German-on-German espionage in *Deutschland 83*. Or, as in my discussion of *Dogs of Berlin*'s main plotlines, they carry denationalized tales about interethnic tensions and identity clashes in the German metropole to streaming audiences in over 190 countries—with the exception of China, Syria, and North Korea. With Netflix's global availability, Berlin screen miniatures have likewise become globally available. They emerge from account feeds across the world at the same moment in time and to the globally concerted, promotional fanfare of "One Story Away" campaign. Overall, it would seem that Netflix has reaped the benefits of the promotional seeds that it sowed. International audiences have taken notice of the new German kid on the stream programming block, and are paying attention.

A specific corner of YouTube that houses an extremely resolute online audience proves as much. There are an enormous number of video-stream users who log on for hours to watch live-reaction reviews of trailers for upcoming Netflix stream series. The genre of the reaction video and its attention economy on YouTube is significant, for it is part of our global contemporary screen economy, both in areas of traditional content production and promotion and even more so with the release of streaming content and the creation of digital buzz around it.[33] It is, after all, the interactional construction of attention that adds to the very production of *Dogs of Berlin*'s Berlin screen product—that is to say, the actual series that is manufactured by Netflix's calculated, networked, cultural diffusion campaigns. More importantly, however, the informal fan review culture on YouTube functions as a tool for stream co-consumption and co-production. Review videos with their comment sections allow for a sensorial communication on YouTube. Reviewers and users can express how they feel about the streaming product that

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yet another streaming platform introduces them to in excerpts (see Figure 7.5).

When watching a live-reaction review of *Dogs of Berlin*'s pre-release trailer and reading its comment section, one will encounter a discussion dedicated to the concept of realness and authenticity around *Dogs of Berlin*'s "Berlinness" as a representation of national Germanness. The reactions to the teaser's glimpse at the big city *Kulturminiatur* (culture miniature) of neo-noir Berlin are not surprising, given that the question "How real is it?" permeates hundreds of thousands of YouTube's review and react videos.[34] The same is true for videos in the genre of *expert reacts to/real* (insert profession), *comments on*, or videos presenting *my review of* narratives. The underlying question is always the same: "Is it real and is it authentic?" This brings us to the question "How German is it really?" and how does the online usership feel about this denationalized screen Germanness? Marked by the use of hybrid genres and communication styles, humor, irony, or sometimes anger and insults, and the idea of co-consuming and thereby co-creating, there is a sense of relational, secondhand curation that emerges from the review users' real reactions to fictional-content Berlin. In the example I cite here, the review users co-critique, co-reflect on, and co-author the impact of the *Dogs of Berlin*'s trailer review video, which in turn creates an ecology of true participation around *Dogs of Berlin*'s screen Germanness. It is crucial to note that this Berlin does not necessarily feel real because of the way it appears on screen or because of what is shown and what the characters say. Rather, this version of Berlin feels real to the people talking about it and reacting to it, because their interest in the series is real.

In stark contrast, domestic critics and large parts of the German-speaking streaming audience found the show lacking in realness. A major point of their criticism, as summed up by a review for the Turkish-German news website *Ahval*, touches on the sense of inauthenticity and a reaction of distrust and disconnect. The series evoked these reactions among viewers who were familiar to some extent with Berlin's local and Germany's national history and cultural context in objective reality: "The reviews are in for Netflix's second German production, and most agree that *Dogs of Berlin* is overly grim, with too many clichés, too much going on, weak writing and cynical characters more representative of stereotypes than actual human beings."[35] Going into a detailed explanation for its stance on a lack of authentic representation in *Dogs of Berlin*, the review I cite here takes up the question of reality, and how accurately the series presents the issues it purports to thematize as part of Berlin city's Germanness:

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> One of the recurring themes of the show is the tensions inherent in being a person of Turkish heritage in Germany. Germany has the second-largest Muslim population in Western Europe after France. Among Germany's nearly 4.7 million Muslims, around 3 million are of Turkish origin, more than any country outside Turkey. Anti-Muslim and anti-Turkish views have increased since Germany accepted a million refugees in 2015 and 2016. . . . At times, *Dogs of Berlin* almost reads as an apology, from liberal-minded Germans to their Turkish compatriots.[36]

#KinoCheck #Trailer #DogsOfBerlin
DOGS OF BERLIN Trailer German Deutsch (2018) Netflix
KinoCheck 2.61M subscribers Join Subscribe 4.6K Share Save

537K views 4 years ago
Offizieller "Dogs of Berlin" Trailer Deutsch German 2018 | Abonnieren ➤ http://abo.yt/kc | (OT: Dogs of Berlin) Serie Trailer | Release: 7 Dez 2018 | Filminfos https://KinoCheck.de/serie/d24/dogs-o...
"Dogs of Berlin" erzählt die Geschichte zweier Berliner Kommissare, die trotz all ihrer Gegensätze gegen ihren Willen zusammenarbeiten müssen. In einem Machtkampf mit der Berliner Unterwelt werden sie mit ihren eigenen menschlichen Schwächen und Verbrechen konfrontiert und zu einer endgültigen Entscheidung darüber gezwungen, auf welcher Seite des Gesetzes sie eigentlich stehen ...more

473 Comments Sort by

Add a comment...

YouTube AU Search

Der brandneue #Trailer zu #DogsOfBerlin mit Fahri Yardim ist hier!
Hat Dir das Video gefallen? Dann teile es mit deinen Freunden oder lasse uns dein Like da.
Mehr Infos findest Du unter: https://kinocheck.de/serie/d24/dogs-of-berlin-2018
27 Reply
3 replies

3 years ago (edited)
Anfangs schlecht (gerade die Fussballszenen), ab Mitte bis zum Ende aber immer besser, trotz aller übertriebenen klischees. Ich fands echt unterhaltend weil kein Leerlauf entsteht und immer was passiert und das ganze irgendwie völlig größenwahnsinnig ist! Hoffe auf Staffel 2 !!!
163 Reply
1 reply

years ago
Kranke Serie! Konnte nicht aufhören zu schauen, wollte immer wissen wie es weiter geht. Einfach super Gelungen, geile Story!
Staffel 2???
20 Reply

3 years ago
Ich verstehe nicht,wieso alle die Serie so schlecht machen. Is ne echt geile Serie
318 Reply
7 replies

3 years ago
Ich liebe die Serie :-) mega spannend und trotzdem mit Empathie und Mitgefühl erzählt ! YEAH !
13 Reply

2 years ago
Absolut geile Serie!!!! Da muss unbedingt noch ne zweite Staffel kommen
4 Reply

2 years ago
sehr gute serie!! Ich warte auf die zweite Staffel, weil es für einige unvollendete Dinge der Handlung eine neue Staffel verdienen würde
5 Reply

year ago (edited)
Einer der krassesten Serien ich freue mich schon auf Staffel 2
5 Reply

3 years ago
Bitte eine 2 Staffel.!!! Die geilste Deutsche Serie ever. Spannend bis zum Schluss, und das kann nicht der Schluss gewesen sein.
2 Reply

Figure 7.5. German-language user comments published in the comment section one to two years after the initial release of the series. Posted by KinoCheck channel, original post 9 December 2018. Screenshot by Benjamin Nickl.

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Dogs of Berlin's denationalized screen Germanness polarizes. That much is clear if one follows the tale of its reception that emerges from the different coordinates of transnational reception online (see figure 7.5), a Rotten Tomatoes audience score of 85 percent, and a second season whose future is still unknown at this point. A comment by the series' director, Christian Alvart, caused additional controversy among the German Arab and Muslim communities when the German-born filmmaker and screenwriter said that there "is a real example, an original template that I know from my real environment for each character that appears in the series. And I trust that."[37] Yet the online reviews, the critics' remarks, and viewer-users' exchanges about the series in real life contributed significantly to the revenue that *Dogs of Berlin* contributed to Netflix's "After Dark" section. It would also seem that, in time, *Dogs of Berlin* has managed to produce a second-wave reception after the initial launch of the series that shows a shift in German-speaking audience attitudes. This achievement owes much to the initial 2018 critical reception in German-speaking stream environments online and, in no small measure, owes as much—if not more—to the global attention phenomenon surrounding the streaming TV craze that is Berlin noir. The Berlin city fandom had already been at work for years before its supporters started to embed *Dogs of Berlin* in the wider network of related series such as *4 Blocks* (2017–19), *Babylon Berlin* (2017–), and *Beat* (2018).

Berlin's New Platform Phantoms

Netflix has certainly recognized the achievement of original German stream content, doubling investment in German-language streaming content to 500 million euros between 2021 and 2023.[38] The representation ecology around neo-noir Berlin has created a profound cultural, economic, and technological opportunity for streaming audiences to indulge in a frenzy of German dancing, drug taking, and crime chasing, and the (re)historicizing of culture. A new version of digital Germanness has emerged from Netflixized stories about the past and present structures and national conflicts that define German society. The denationalized Germany of stream screen Berlin now lives on in global memory, and has become part of a worldwide conversation about a cultural presence the world can learn from or at the very least be entertained by. But how is this possible? How exactly can one define these fictional versions of Berlin that travel the global stream of televisual content at unprecedented rates of consumption and with inordinate

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amounts of temporal consumption? And what will be the sociocultural impact and the real-world consequences if audiences in 190 countries consume such a large amount of German culture and history immediately and simultaneously via the Netflix binge? How can screen studies scholars approach the millionfold replication of the narrative of *Dogs of Berlin* and the effect of its consumptions that takes another million minutes at the least?

The popularity of the new Berlin city fictions reflects a platform and attention *Zeitgeist*. The mediated micropolis that Anders would describe as a phantom of the real, or a cultural miniature of the urban reality of Berlin as Huyssen writes, forms part of a contemporary stream content phenomenon: denationalized, de-historicized, and hyper-localized yet at the same time omni-global[39]—an anywhere Berlin for an everywhere audience that consumes the popular neo-noir-crime city across the world in release-unison via streaming platforms such as Netflix, and curates its reaction via second or third screens and social media. Through the easy availability and shareability of this Berlin, its circulation creates additional layers of textuality around the plaything that is the city of Berlin and its mediated Germanness. In this volume on *Entertaining German Culture*, with German culture as readily available on-demand entertainment, I therefore end my chapter by scrutinizing the novel "embedded everydayness" of the new Berlin city genre as an anytime and anyplace experience.[40] It is a genre that has been around for an exceptionally long time. Yet, I have not sought to do so in terms of a linear progression, where one mediated form of Berlin city supersedes the other and thus turns the earlier version obsolete and outshines it. The neo-national stream screen city is extremely accessible, quick to consume and to get hooked on, with transnational genre-fusion formulas that deliver a neo-local core while forgoing all the specific national aspects.

The larger question that emerges is thus whether this stream screen experience is still the social experience that we have previously associated with TV representation or literary technologies that mediate Germanness. It is here that inroads made in televisual content and new TV technologies of mass consumption are helpful in finding an answer by turning to concrete case studies such as popular big city, neo crime noir longform streaming entertainment. Major research projects on linear TV in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, most of which are studies of television's cultural narrative, have identified a number of essential qualities in the aggregate experience of all images and sounds carried by the

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small box.[41] Some of their qualities also surface in this chapter and my study of the new Berlin city genre, not least "liveness" and "connectedness," the perceived simultaneity of image capture, and reproduction of Berlin space in millions of geographically dispersed locations.

Piper's concept of an embedded, personalized everyday practice of TV consumption, and how it can be articulated in TV audience research, thus goes back to that very same line of thought that I have raised throughout this chapter in reference to space-place-screen thinking and the place(s) of mediation for Berlin city. Citing this paradigm here in conclusion, for it is the linear TV experience that bleeds across borders of devices and countries now online, I suggest that contemporary German culture studies may want to invest more substantially in examining what nations do with content that is rooted in their daily screen reality; and, more urgently, what that content does with the nature of imagined national space as it delivers representations of the Germanness both within and beyond its national borders and cultural boundaries. What is the nature of stream content mediation and what are its effects? How have and how will the screen presence of *Dogs of Berlin* and more of these series yet to come affect millions of viewer-users? And what kind of responsibility, if any, does this put on the providers and the programmers and creators of this content?

We still know too little about "transmedia television," a concept pioneered in Elizabeth Evans's 2011 study.[42] Even less is known to us about the intersection of transmedia TV and national Germanness and popular culture. "Transreal television," as I refer to the phase that we find ourselves in right now with popular screen culture, poses urgent new questions. They are meant for scholars who have already examined how globalization, digitization, neoliberalization, and personalization have all played their part in shifting the (inter)face of television as a cultural event in the last two decades. As it stands, this is precisely the problem this chapter addresses. To chart the neo-noir Netflix city of Berlin and the capital city more than other space-place-locale configurations in the cultural geography of Germany is to chart the representational praxis of Germanness. Generations of scholars have pursued this transnational paradigm that focuses on content creation, mediation, and consumption. German cultural anthropologists have, for instance, examined how Germany's nationhood is made to be seen. To that end, they have been "pursuing strands of cultural debate in literature, history, the visual arts, and language from the eighteenth century to the present."[43] Now it is time for German screen studies

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scholarship to move this discussion on to the Video on Demand portal and to streaming.

In this realm, Netflix intrigues. In fact, it fascinates because of the borderless-viewing-yet-distinct-liveliness-experience message that it crafts with global-made-to-feel-local realities such as the one presented in *Dogs of Berlin*. This approach recalls not only HBO's cunningly marketed "Not TV" era, but also, as pushed primarily through the European Union's post-Cold War period, brings back notions of cultural integration of states wholly or partially in Europe or nearby: borderless binging, borderless Berlin, borderless Germany and a universal Germanness. In online streaming, we find a world unbound that is mediated but real. We consume a screen reality that has been miniaturized and literally given into our hands as playthings. For Turner, the way that Netflix positions itself and its viewer-users' content experience responds to these integrated-integrating "cultures of use" that have implanted the lived realities of people's lives deeply into how individuals and communities consume television across spaces and devices.[44] So deep in fact that, when the visual media reinvented itself for the digital era of streaming, it sought to position itself as the reflection of the diversity that audiences experienced in a rapidly changing world. Each experience, and this includes contemporary Germanness and its neo-noir residence in the big city, is now just one screen and one download away.

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Notes

I would like to acknowledge Gisela Dachs from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Anne Beier from the Freie Universität Berlin. This chapter builds in parts on our research group's work on cultural technologies and streaming, and an audience research project on the transnationalization of meaning via Berlin city on television. The chapter presents the extension of my research talk that I delivered on the Netflixization of *Dogs of Berlin* at the 2019 German Studies Association annual conference meeting in Portland, Oregon. I also wish to thank another research project partner of mine, Chris Müller from Macquarie University in Sydney. Our collaborative research work and translations of the trailblazing media and screen studies philosophy of Günther Anders proved invaluable for my reflections on the nature of streaming and the stream screen's content experience as "real" reality.

1. Devitt, "Re-Fusing Form in Genre Study," 29–30.
2. Audience studies have shown that Netflix and other on-demand platform users prefer familiar content structures over unfamiliar ones, hence the suggestions for what viewers will likely enjoy based on content, and formats they are already acquainted with. This ecology of familiarity is provided by the feed algorithms, and represents a datafied taste profile of a user or group of users under the same platform account.
3. Citton, *Ecology of Attention*, 23–24.
4. Nickl, "Romancing the Reich," 90–92.
5. Boullier, "Designing Envelopes," 66.
6. Mikos and Castro, "Binge-Watching," 112–14.
7. Müller and Nickl, "Script for an Audio Adaptation," 1–2.
8. Glebatis Perks, "Binge-Watching Conditions and Multitasking," 88–90.
9. Stolz, "National, Transnational, Transcultural Media," 146.
10. Watts, "National TV as Transnational 'Cinematic' Object," 163–66.
11. Jenner, "Transnationalising Genre," 183.
12. None of the points that I raise, of course, are entirely new when it comes to what I call "screen city" scholarship. Nor do I pose completely novel questions about the city of Berlin on screen and its relationship to stream audiences and to the off-screen original. The scholarship on cinematic (Shiel, "Cinema and the City in History and Theory," 2), or televised (McCarthy, *Ambient Television*, 5–10), or handheld (Hawley, "Locative Narrative and an iPhone App") screen city fictions already offers approaches to genre productions such as *Dogs of Berlin*. These approaches relate to series that feature a big city as shorthand for a national experientiality. Of the city as the subject of visual anthropology and associated communal feeling, whether it is a feeling of trauma or a feeling of joy, Lindner also writes that the screen city's "accompanying pictures and symbols make the physical space even more 'real', since the imaginary is not, after all, opposed to reality, but draws on it and 'deepens' it in a specific way" (Lindner, "The Imaginary of the City," 114).
13. Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*, 104–7.
14. Ibid., 103.
15. In German Screen Studies (as opposed to popular television and series histories and to mainstream culture studies, which stress viewer-text interactions and analysis of representation), it seems that most researchers who work on television cities consider the metropolis mainly in regard to its historical place in the nation and/or read the images of the city on screen in relation to cultural milieu and the sentiment complex of Heimat. In their work on the screen city's socio-national (em)place(ment) and the

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images offered there—though absolutely vital to any understanding of the big city as a focal point for civil society and its larger cultural clashes and struggles—these scholars only footnote the metropole's equally important and long relationship with screen technology. However, as I argue here based on Jenner's essay collection on the binge experientiality, studies that dismiss the screen as the text's affective medium ignore a large part of the streaming experience.

16. Only the second original production in Netflix's so-called "After Dark" programming block, *Dogs of Berlin* is rumored to have spent heavily on cast, crew, and on-site shoots. Various online forums peg the production value for season one at close to 18 million euros. If confirmed by Netflix's tight-lipped production offices, it would still be only half of the 40 million euros that it cost to produce an average season of *Babylon Berlin*, the German noir crime series that is described as the most expensive drama series in Germany to date. This figure dwarfs the cumulative annual budget of all fifteen versions of *Tatort*, the German crime and detective series that is produced by the various regional divisions of ARD, Germany's premiere public broadcasting channel. The only exception here is *Tatort*'s Berlin production franchise, which contributes two episodes a year at a cost of 1.4 to 2.8 million euros each (Kimmelman, "German Viewers"). Given the audience draw of Germany's capital city that I discuss in this chapter, and the fact that public and private TV programmers find themselves in competition for audience attention, one may call such lavish spending necessary in face of the streaming boom and its primacy with screen audiences.
17. Creeber, "Killing Us Softly," 21–22.
18. Ibid., 22.
19. See my discussion of metropole Berlin as the backdrop for German multicultural comedy fictions in the TV series *Turkish for Beginners* (2006–8) in *Turkish German Muslims and Comedy Entertainment* (Nickl, 2020).
20. Forshaw, *Nordic Noir*, 10–14; Bergman, "The Well-Adjusted Cops," 35.
21. Creeber, "Killing Us Softly," 31.
22. Waade, "Melancholy in Nordic Noir," 382–85.
23. Ibid., 384.
24. Keck, "Netflix Is Shifting the Way It Ranks Its Most Popular Titles."
25. Keck, "Netflix Reveals How Many Accounts Are Actually Watching Its Top Titles."
26. Ibid.
27. Halle, "German Film, Aufgehoben," 7; Halle, *German Film after Germany*, 12–14.
28. Nickl, *Turkish German Muslims*, 35–40; Nickl, "Romancing the Reich," 93–95.
29. Krauß, "Quality Series," 47–48; Mikos, "Berlin as Location and Production Site," 373–75.
30. Fisher and Mennel, *Spatial Turns*, 1–13.
31. Wayne and Uribe Sandoval, "Netflix Original Series," 1–2; Burroughs, "House of Netflix," 1–3.
32. Huyssen, "The Urban Miniature," 173.
33. Kim, "Globalization of the Privatized Self-Image," 345–47.
34. Müller and Nickl, "Script for an Audio Adaptation," 1.
35. Lepeska, "The Trouble with Being a German Turk."
36. Ibid.
37. Lukic, "*Dogs of Berlin*."
38. Grosser, "Netflix Unveils New German-Language Films and Series."
39. Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*, 148.
40. Piper, "Broadcast Drama," 164.

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41. Jenner, "Transnationalising Genre," 184–86.
42. Evans, *Transmedia Television*, 1–4.
43. Herminghouse and Mueller, "Looking for Germania," 1.
44. Turner, "Approaching the Cultures of Use," 222.

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Chapter 8

Now Mainstreaming

Queer Phenomenology, Techno, and the Transnational in *Beat* and *Futur Drei*

Tom Smith

As streaming has facilitated increasingly transnational productions, aesthetic transformations, and global consumption of film and television, it has had advantages for queer programming. Large multinationals like Netflix and Amazon reach a globally dispersed digital queer community better than broadcast media or art-house cinemas, and queer content is clearly marketable, given the frequent presence of LGBTQ+ as a category on streaming homepages, and indeed on the streaming platforms of traditional networks.[1] Yet this mainstreaming of queer film and television also brings frustration, encapsulated in the concept of queerbaiting, when advertising suggests a queer storyline where there is at best a cursory nod to queerness.[2] Transnational financing, production, and distribution via streaming may be creating new markets, but queer programming, especially from queer of color and postmigrant perspectives, still lacks resources within the entertainment industry. Some recent productions featuring queer of color protagonists have cast exclusively straight actors, for example, or been accused of neglecting diversity behind the camera.[3] Similar questions arise at an aesthetic level: some writers insert queer characters into marketable genres with transnational appeal without challenging those genres' dependence on heterosexuality. In this context, queer characters or storylines can appear out of place or stereotyped. Yet some productions stage and challenge these issues.[4] In the German context, such productions suggest that the transnational must be more than simply mainstream

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programming with global reach. This version of the queer transnational chimes with Benedict Schofield's concept of the transnational, which entails "productive dislocation."[5] It depends on a meeting of perspectives that disrupt or confound expectations and genres, explore new ways of working, and take seriously the transnational experience of queers in the entertainment industry.

In this chapter, I explore what it means for queer transnational film and television to be mainstream, and analyze two queer productions that approach this question in contrasting ways: Marco Kreuzpaintner's Amazon Prime Video series *Beat* (2018) and the Jünglinge film collective's feature *Futur Drei* (No Hard Feelings, 2020). While *Beat* suggests the incompatibility of queer storylines with transnational genres and mainstream platforms, *Futur Drei* draws on a pop cultural mainstream that is both queer and transnational, but does so outside of the mainstream broadcast and entertainment industry. Both films are multilingual: besides the English slang common in German pop culture, significant sections of *Beat* are in Russian and Arabic and *Futur Drei* features code-switching between German and Persian. *Beat* is an internationally funded streaming series backed by Amazon, with a local cast and crew and a global, albeit mixed, reception. *Futur Drei* had more success at festivals and with critics.[6] It was one of the most successful debut features in 2020, and the pandemic meant that its creators explored the possibilities for a streaming release hosted with German distributor Salzgeber. This low-budget, locally financed debut by a young queer postmigrant collective is transnational not because of international finance but because of production methods emphasizing collectivity, positionality, and shared transnational experiences. Transnational production strategies are also reflected in the two works' hybrid aesthetics and their shared exploration of forced migration and refugee experience alongside portrayals of clubs, parties, and a global electronic music scene.

Taken together, these productions require critics to differentiate in how we describe the mainstreaming of transnational queer culture. They suggest that a queer transnational film and TV studies depends on challenging the normative function of entertainment multinationals and centering a diversity of queer perspectives within the industry. While *Beat* presents a nighttime economy dependent on transnational criminality, human trafficking, and the arms trade, *Futur Drei* insists that the queer transnational can exist in fleeting moments of joy and small, low-budget, collective productions. International finance, global mobility, and high-profile platforms are less important here than shared

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experience, collective organizing, and queer postmigrant creativity. This understanding of the transnational has been developed especially in work on Black women's internationalism. In Keisha Blain's work on women's organizing in Chicago, she shifts focus to forms of internationalism pursued by working-class women without the resources to travel, but who "immersed themselves in global politics *without* ever physically crossing national borders."[7] In the German context, Tiffany Florvil's work on Black History Month events in Berlin in the 1990s shows how queer and straight people of color in Germany have responded to global movements, sharing transnational knowledge and experience while remaining rooted in local communities.[8] *Beat*'s critique of globalization and the collective, entangled understanding of the queer transnational in *Futur Drei* suggest that theories of the transnational that avoid privileging mobility have important resonances for the study of film and TV in the streaming age. Advances in queer representation mean these questions are bound up with debates on the value of mainstreaming for queer culture's transnational reach. In the following, I discuss the production, reception, and aesthetic of the two works, and show how each articulates an opposing relationship to the idea of a transnational mainstream. I draw on Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology and research from popular music studies to shed light on the ideas of the mainstream in both works. Despite their differences, *Beat* and *Futur Drei* suggest a powerful critique of production norms in film and television. *Futur Drei* goes a step further and offers a model for film and TV to challenge minoritizing trends by linking the transnational power of popular culture to a broader range of queer-centered perspectives.

Beat (2018): Mainstream Genres and the Transnational Underground

Beat, written and directed by Marco Kreuzpaintner and released on 9 November 2018, creates a collage of genres that juxtaposes the conflict between underground and mainstream in Berlin's techno scene with tensions between the local and transnational in its depictions of organized crime, arms sales, and human trafficking. It is among a growing number of German-language productions on Amazon's Prime Video platform since 2017. Amazon acquired distribution rights to existing series *Pastewka* (2005–20, Amazon from 2018), *Der Lack ist ab* (2015–, Amazon since 2017) and *Deutschland 86* and *89* (2018–20). Amazon's first German-language original *You Are Wanted* (2017–18) was its first

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non-Anglophone series on global release, and *Beat* develops its setting in Berlin and interest in transnational crime.[9] The production of *Beat* parallels the interplay between global influence and local situatedness in Berlin's techno scene itself, drawing on Amazon's international financing and distribution structures while employing a largely local crew. German producers Pantaleon and Hellinger/Doll partnered with Warner Bros. who, Kreuzpaintner says, allowed him great freedom in his work with the series.[10] Kreuzpaintner is an established name in queer German cinema, best known for the queer coming-of-age film *Sommersturm* (2004). *Beat* cast members were well known in Germany, but while some had already had international success, especially Alexander Fehling (*Goethe!*, *Inglourious Basterds*, *Homeland*), most were still developing international profiles, including Jannis Niewöhner, Kostja Ullmann, and Karoline Herfurth, who had also appeared in *You Are Wanted*. Niewöhner has gone on to star in Netflix's *Munich—The Edge of War* (2021), suggesting *Beat* was an important career move into international streaming dramas. Many scenes in *Beat* were filmed on location in Berlin, making the most of internationally famous but recognizably local club spaces like Watergate, the venue Kraftwerk which shares a building with the club Tresor, as well as the steel and glass architecture of German government facilities along the Spree. Such spaces are general enough to appeal internationally, yet specific enough to offer rewards to viewers with knowledge of Berlin.

In the reception of the series, the release date of 9 November further targeted a knowledgeable audience by following a common tendency in German media to tie the techno scene to the opening of the Berlin Wall.[11] Amazon do not share viewing figures, so the reception of the series is hard to quantify, a fact that Kreuzpaintner himself welcomes.[12] It streamed worldwide with dubbing and subtitles in several languages, won the Grimme-Preis in Germany, and was reviewed in German- and English-speaking press, although these reviews were often lukewarm.[13] The transnational appeal of Kreuzpaintner's portrayal of club culture was clear, with reviewers agreeing that *Beat* captures crowd dynamics and the mix of excitement and exhaustion perfectly.[14] To film club scenes, the producers created an actual party with loud music that lasted through the night, and the sound mix was adapted in postproduction so that dialogue was audible where necessary.[15] That meant that dancers were really dancing and the delirium and exhaustion on their faces is real. The success of these scenes led Amazon to release a 50-minute edit with a techno mix primarily of music by Aleph-1 entitled *Club-Nacht Home Edition* (2020) after the Covid-19 lockdowns had

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closed Berlin's clubs.[16] Kreuzpaintner's mix of genres elicited a less enthusiastic response: reviewers described its combination of spy thriller, crime drama, Berlin film, mafia series, and absurdist horror as overly complicated and unsuccessfully realized.[17] Focusing on queer characters and motifs, however, shows how Kreuzpaintner's techniques draw attention to the awkward status of queer storylines within mainstream genres in transnational television.

Kreuzpaintner's thriller is set in Berlin's techno scene, imagined as a site of organized crime and the excesses of international capitalism. The series is a hybrid of genres, initially suggesting a whodunit before moving between a gangster plot, the spy genre, the more specifically German genre of the Berlin film, and the club settings that dominate mainstream queer representations internationally. Kreuzpaintner's play with thriller genres represents a substantial "inward absorption" of genres and styles that have proven internationally successful on streaming platforms, as well as on German broadcast media.[18] However, the queer tropes in the series complicate a model of inward and outward influence. Club settings are a staple of queer television internationally, from Manchester's Canal Street in *Queer as Folk* (1999) to New York ball culture in *Pose* (2018–21). Using club scenes as a vehicle for queer German storylines might therefore represent "inward absorption" of motifs from Anglophone cultures. By drawing on the Berlin film, though, the series joins a lineage of internationally successful German productions, a kind of "outward absorption" of Berlin film tropes into queer visual cultures.[19] Queer characters, homoeroticism, and desire also unsettle the thriller genres, so that an influence of queer culture on straight genres is evident in the at times uncomfortable plot dynamics of *Beat*. This awkward hybrid suggests that not all influences are absorbed easily or equally into mainstream genre expectations. The result is a production that unsettles genre expectations and foregrounds the difficulties caused by mainstreaming queer culture.

The tension between mainstream and underground, local and transnational, and queer and heteronormative are central to the series, as they are in Berlin's club scene. The story revolves around a fictional techno club Sonar and its promoter Robert Schlag, alias Beat. Beat never describes his own sexual identity, but is presented as bi or pansexual. As in a police procedural, the plot begins with dead bodies discovered hanging from the club ceiling. This whodunit plot intersects with Beat's conflict with the club's new investor, Philipp Vossberg, who was brought in by Beat's friend and partner Paul. Beat's antagonism with Philipp is initially based on concern that the club has become too main-

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stream. As he criticizes Philipp, Beat nostalgically describes Sonar's early days as an underground venue:

> Beat: "We put on our first party in an auto repair shop and got drinks with a fake Metro card. I remember we were hoping back then that a hundred people would come. How many came?"
> Paul: "800."
> Beat: "800. Insane [*Alter*]! That was success. Maybe we were already screwed from that day on."[20]

Success here is negatively connoted, and carries associations of financial gain, mass appeal, and mainstream popularity. Drawing on tropes around Swabians in Prenzlauer Berg, Beat comments: "These people come to Berlin because Berlin is the way it is, and then they turn it into Stuttgart."[21] "These people" here are Philipp and his associates, shown speaking Russian on the club's mezzanine, filmed in dark shadows with unsettled low- and high-angle shots and indistinct, unsubtitled dialogue. Philipp does not turn out to be an agent of gentrification, and the migration foregrounded in the film is not from Swabia but from Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. The whodunit swerves into the gangster genre, as Beat discovers that Philipp is trading arms to terrorist organizations and then trafficking and killing the people displaced to sell their organs to transplant patients in Germany. As part of this operation, he is involved with a Ukrainian mafia family.[22] The spy genre is also woven into the plot, with Beat recruited by European Security Intelligence (ESI) agents Richard Diemer and Emilia to spy on Philipp. In these plot twists, Beat's concerns about his club becoming mainstream and Berlin becoming gentrified are amplified into a portrayal of the worst excesses of global capitalism. Even Beat, with his opposition to mainstreaming and suspicion of ESI, becomes implicated in espionage and drawn into transnational flows of crime, money, and influence.

For all Beat protests his club's underground credentials, Kreuzpaintner depicts Club Sonar as a quintessential large Berlin club, a mainstream venue with an international clientele and carefully curated postindustrial aesthetic. Its appearance is assembled from several locations. The vaulted concrete and steel interior and smaller underground rooms were largely shot at Kraftwerk, combining features associated with Berghain and Kraftwerk's neighbor Tresor. KitKatClub is used for smaller interiors and Watergate's Mainfloor for one dancefloor; Watergate is also name-checked as a collaborator with the fictional Sonar. Outside Club Sonar, the railway lines along the Spree add to the postin-

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dustrial aesthetic, while metal walkways and steps, like those around Warschauer Straße and Ostkreuz before their redevelopment, create a sense of provisionality. Even Beat's personal style combines clichés of the Berlin scene: tattoos, drug taking, and a chaotic shared apartment in a redeveloped East German block. The series addresses a dual audience, allowing those knowledgeable about Berlin's clubs to spot locations and references, and to access a specific level of critique of the commercialization of the Berlin techno scene. The series caters to viewers less familiar with club cultures in other ways: for example, Richard explains for his boss at the ESI, and for uninitiated viewers, what it means to be a club promoter and why Beat is the ideal informant. The techno scene is a vehicle for reaching global audiences, while exploring the specificity of Berlin as a location. Beat's concerns about people moving to Berlin reflect on a diegetic level the series' attempts to reach an international audience, by relating the boom in transnational television to concerns in Berlin around gentrification and mainstreaming.

In *Beat*, as in Berlin's scene, attempts to distance oneself from the mainstream are linked to a policing of belonging in the city's electronic music subcultures. Here the word "mainstream" is an accusation: anything mainstream is at once excessive—too dominant, too popular, too commercial—and insufficient: derivative, formulaic, uncool. This vague, usually dismissive usage was often voiced in earlier popular music scholarship, especially following David Hebdige's work on subcultures.[23] Writers on popular culture have since embraced the mainstream, arguing for the need to take seriously its genres and practices and criticizing the tendency to present mainstream music as too feminine or queer.[24] Scholars have also scrutinized the effect of the term itself. Sarah Thornton's pioneering ethnography of club cultures, for example, demonstrates the mainstream's power as a "trope" that young people mobilize to "imagine their social world, assert their cultural worth, claim their subcultural capital."[25] She describes how "most clubbers and ravers characterize their own crowd as mixed or difficult to classify," but they use the idea of the mainstream to "identify a homogeneous crowd to which they don't belong."[26] Germany's diverse and varied techno scene shows the ambivalence of these dynamics: while its electronic music industry profits from international success, scene insiders like Beat build community through disidentification with mainstreaming, gentrification, and commercialization.[27] Berlin's clubs have driven a boom in international tourism, yet this reputation depends on music, door policies, and aesthetics that help clubbers feel they have accessed something underground and exclusive.[28] Many Berliners, meanwhile,

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link techno tourism and migration to gentrification, and are working to combat inequalities along lines of race, gender, sexuality, and class.[29] The premise for *Beat* explores the connections between these dynamics within the techno scene and broader social and economic factors, especially the interplay between the local and globalization.

Kreuzpaintner associates the mainstream closely with the transnational, and positions Beat in opposition to its representatives, including agents and DJs, the intelligence agency, and the mafia family. These conflicts also mean Beat fits uncomfortably within these genres and disrupts their flow. Ahmed's queer phenomenology focuses on the perceptions of those who do not or cannot go with the flow of mainstream norms, and argues that the force of those norms is perceived most keenly by those swimming against the tide. For example, she explores the concept of "flow" in so-called positive psychology: "Flow describes the experience of an individual engaged with the world, or involved with the world, where the world is not encountered as alien, as an obstacle or resistance."[30] Marginalized subjects who experience the world and its norms as alien, and who feel the force of the mainstream, are prevented from achieving "flow" by constant resistance, stoppages, or countercurrents.[31] To understand the norms that distinguish the mainstream from the underground, a discussion must therefore start with the perspectives of those who are stopped, turned back at the door, or blocked from self-realization within the scene. Ahmed also helps us think about the prestige attached to being outside the mainstream. In the techno scene, insiders like Beat prize going against the flow, and yet being successfully outside the mainstream depends even more on networks and access. Some profit more than others from maintaining underground credentials, and rejecting mainstream venues is often a luxury for financially successful artists and those well-known enough to receive such invitations. When clubbers dismiss the mainstream, their self-positioning as an outsider can disguise the structures of racism and heterosexism that shape cultures around techno.

Club Sonar is mainstream in Ahmed's sense too, in that it encapsulates how the club scene is bound up with normative forces felt most strongly by those marginalized or exploited. In *Beat*, these forces always operate transnationally and to the detriment of queer characters and refugees. As with Ahmed's discussion, *Beat* uses metaphors of flow and cycles to describe the exploitative workings of global capitalism. Philipp's criminality is explained in an episode entitled "Loop," referencing both the use of prerecorded loops in electronic music and

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the circular flow of goods and capital in Philipp's arms and human trafficking trade. This metaphor adds to the emphasis in *Beat* that the techno scene is entangled with the most violent forms of capitalism. In episode two, Emilia reveals that Philipp has invested in Sonar because it is a former air-raid bunker with walls three meters thick that block surveillance, a reference to early 1990s club Bunker. The fabric of the building, which is important for its underground appeal, also makes Sonar valuable for Philipp's criminal empire. The club is a confluence for Philipp's organizations, so that its underground aesthetic is part of the mainstream capitalist system that Beat rejects. The victims in this system are primarily North African and Middle Eastern people displaced by violence and then kidnapped and murdered by Philipp's company, dramatizing in the starkest terms Ahmed's argument that the "force" of the mainstream is felt most keenly by those disadvantaged by global inequalities.

Although *Beat* seeks to mainstream queerness and normalize queer storylines in thriller genres, queer elements mostly disrupt and block these transnational flows, just as Ahmed describes how queer people are stopped by, but also stand in the way of, mainstream forces. The figure of queer obstructiveness at Sonar is its door manager, Beat's trans colleague Fräulein Sundström. She is authoritative, well liked, and confident, commanding respect at the door to an exclusive venue. Her character gestures to the importance of queer and trans people in Berlin's scene, referencing drag artist, writer, and actor Melitta Sundström and the Kreuzberg gay bar named after her. As door manager, Fräulein Sundström embodies the role of queers as blockages, in Ahmed's terms. She curates the crowd inside the club, determines people's access, and holds the power to stop would-be clubbers by refusing them entry. When Beat needs to hide from Philipp's accomplices, Sundström's apartment is the one place he can hide that is beyond his reach: "If there's anyone at all who can still protect me, it's her." There may be little escape in the series from the flows of capitalism, violence, or exploitation, but if any refuge is possible it is hyperlocal rather than transnational: close queer friendships and the history of Berlin's queer cultural life.

Beat is set up as a queer character when he first walks into Sonar, in a scene that resonates with hedonist parties in queer film and television from *Coming Out* (1989) to *It's a Sin* (2021). After a few establishing shots of a full club, Beat kisses a woman in the crowd. The camera cuts to him dancing with her and a young man with their arms around him, all three facing the camera. He kisses them both and they dance sensu-

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ally to the music. Richard's voice-over over the rapid visual edits and fast-moving camera situates the ESI as outsiders, even voyeurs in this environment. As the agents discuss recruiting Beat, the images show him and his two lovers taking drugs and having sex, first in the club toilets and then in his apartment. Much of the scene is in partial darkness, occasional flashing lights illuminating the clubbers' skin and giving the effect of snapshots of their intimacy. The music and voice-over remain constant, while fast visual edits create an atmosphere of frenetic hedonism. This scene establishes Beat's bi- or pansexuality and creates Sonar as a space of queer sexual freedom, but viewers have only fleeting impressions and are required to piece them together. This surface treatment of Beat's sexuality adds to the first episode's play with clichés of Berlin clubs, but also normalizes his queerness and multiple partners as part of the scene's everyday. His sexuality remains an irritant for representatives of official institutions: after Beat's questioning about the dead bodies in the club, he overhears one policeman referring to him using a homophobic slur. Beat's conflict with police and intelligence agents as representatives of a broader societal mainstream ensures that Sonar remains part of a queer-coded underground. His queerness suggests that the series is treading two lines carefully: needing a generic Berlin aesthetic that will appeal to a large audience but still seem alternative, and balancing tropes from queer television with the straight-coded dynamics of spy or crime thrillers.

The genres on which *Beat* draws rely on heterosexuality as a plot device. Beat's ambivalent relationship with Emilia was likened by reviewers to the romantic and sexual tension between Carrie and Nick in *Homeland*, for example.[32] Alexander Fehling, who plays Philipp, also featured as Carrie's boyfriend in season five of *Homeland* (2015) set in Berlin, suggesting this as an important model for the "inward absorption" of the spy drama into *Beat*'s web of genres. Early on, Beat jokes about his disagreements with Emilia: "It's going so well with us. You're quite in love with me." Emilia replies good-humoredly: "Don't need to be. My job is guiding you safely through this assignment." Her role is as a guide rather than a romantic lead. Another transnational intertext here is the James Bond franchise, which Beat references by calling Emilia "Jane Bond." In Bond films, ambivalent, untrusting relationships between agents frequently have an erotic dimension. Beat's connection with Emilia, though, lacks any erotic spark that might direct their motivations along the "straight lines" of the spy thriller, to use Ahmed's term for the well-worn, normalized paths through heterosexual life.[33] Kreuzpaintner's play with these dynamics reveals how heterosexuality

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shapes the expectations of mainstream genres. Beat resists incorporation into the flow of these genres, just as they sit uneasily alongside one another in Kreuzpaintner's series.

Moments of queer affiliation disrupt the narrative and introduce additional genres that complicate the story and distract from the unravelling of the criminal networks. Beat's most loving relationship is his friendship with his gay housemate, Janik, which involves a jarring excursus into the gangster genre and the transnational world of the Ukrainian mafia family. One recurring motif of their relationship, which signals its intimacy, is Beat coming in while Janik is half-asleep in bed and haranguing him for something he has or has not done. In episode four, when Janik tells Beat that he has fallen in love, the two hold intense eye contact and communicate in partial sentences that signal familiarity and closeness. Their relationship displays everyday queer affiliation and intense loyalty. Janik's new lover is Danilo, whose brother Igor runs the mafia network. After Sonar's grand reopening, Beat catches Janik going with Danilo to a hotel after-party with the gangsters, and insists on accompanying them. He describes his relationship with Janik to Igor in fraternal terms: "I'm basically like his big brother; I'd like to keep an eye on him." Beat's reference to brotherhood is another performance of genre expectations, as in gangster thrillers where brotherly relationships are a source of allegiance and conflict, from the early *Godfather* films (1972, 1974) to the recent German series *4 Blocks* (2017). In parallel with the series' repetition of prejudiced tropes around East European criminality and masculinity, *Beat* also engages in a sort of homonationalism.[34] Igor condones Danilo's queerness on the provision that he is the "real man" (*muzhik*) when he has sex with Janik. The Ukrainian gangsters' exaggerated homophobia and misogyny present Janik's sexual passivity in conflict with gangster masculinities, and make German characters and Berlin seem tolerant. These exchanges feminize and infantilize Janik: his naivety and passivity resist easy incorporation into the series' genres, just like the non-erotic love between him and Beat. At the mafia party, Danilo dies of an overdose and Beat, in saving Janik, loses a chance to learn about Philipp's dealings with Igor. Janik's melodramatic love for Danilo, and Beat's care for him, frustrate the unraveling of the mystery and involve characters in a generic excursus that makes little practical contribution to understanding Philipp's criminal networks. Janik is ultimately killed in Philipp's reprisal against Beat, standing in for reprisals against wives and children, who are frequently threatened in gangster movies. Janik's passive queerness is an irritant in the narrative, and his loyalty and friendship

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with Beat are powerful enough to divert the flow of the spy genre in unexpected and unresolved ways.

Kreuzpaintner's play with so many genres, all with transnational appeal and a combination of straight and queer, German and international elements, was unpopular with critics and is not always successful. Yet a queer phenomenological reading that is attentive to the dynamics of mainstreaming reveals queer elements in its narrative and aesthetic. With Beat's relationships with Sundström and Janik, *Beat* centers queer dynamics in ways that disrupt the easy flow of genres. This resembles the "dislocation" of Schofield's understanding of the transnational, but in *Beat* it is not clear whether this dislocation is in the end "productive." Rather, queer storylines remain poorly integrated into the wider narrative and mainstream genres are not fundamentally unsettled. Janik draws Beat into a genre that fits uneasily within the spy story or club setting. Kreuzpaintner's excessive bricolage of genres plays with the aesthetic resources of transnational streaming television, and can be read as a critique not only of the trade in arms and human lives depicted in the narrative, but also, perhaps unintentionally, of the demands of the global entertainment industry. Queer relationships are an important underlying thread: Kreuzpaintner presents queer erotics and affiliations as irritants within the genres that drive the success of international streaming networks like Amazon. This season's narrative points to challenges in the mainstreaming of queer storylines. For its queer protagonist, mainstream television cannot offer a secure home any more than he can accept mainstream music, yet nor is he left with any viable underground. As the "loop" of Philipp's criminal empire emerges, boundaries between mainstream and underground are collapsed. Beat and his club are inextricably implicated in the worst excesses of transnational European capitalism and political violence, and his underground is revealed as an illusion.

Futur Drei (2020): A Queer Transnational Mainstream?

In contrast to *Beat*'s development through international finance and production companies and its distribution through Amazon Prime Video, *Futur Drei* is an independent film by a queer, postmigrant film collective, Jünglinge. It shares several concerns with *Beat*, including clubs and bars as spaces for developing queer relationships and identities, and the critique of the conditions experienced by refugees in Germany. Unlike in *Beat*, where people fleeing war and violence are never

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fully characterized, *Futur Drei* centers the experiences of its refugee characters. The clubs, bars, and parties here are on a smaller scale than Sonar in *Beat*, but these small-town venues are imagined as spaces of experimentation and creativity. *Futur Drei* requires a different perspective on the conflicting meanings of the term "transnational." It demonstrates the aesthetic and political importance of centering queer postmigrant voices, and challenges any version of transnational film and television that focuses only on big-budget productions from global streaming providers.

Like *Beat*, *Futur Drei* engages in the project of mainstreaming queerness, but does so instead by combining elements from popular culture that resonate with an international queer following. The "mainstream" in this film is not a subject of disdain or distrust, but of affection, affirmation, and affiliation. This approach chimes with recent pop culture scholarship inspired by queer approaches that proposes a re-evaluation of the mainstream, especially in pop and club music.[35] In contrast to the disidentification from the mainstream depicted in *Beat* and analyzed by Thornton and others, Jason Toynbee suggests an approach with greater resonance for the queer transnational community addressed by Jünglinge's film: "*A mainstream is a formation that brings together large numbers of people from diverse social groups and across large geographical areas in common affiliation to a musical style.*"[36] Toynbee's conception of the mainstream is plural, processual, and transnational. With his term "formation," he retains the image of a shifting phenomenon, but this is less the powerful and exclusionary flow emphasized by Ahmed. In absorbing the many metaphorical tributaries, Toynbee's "mainstreaming" creates room for diverse affiliations across geopolitical boundaries. These affiliations resonate with the queer digital communities suggested in *Futur Drei* and mobilized in the distribution of the film itself. The film samples and explores aspects of mainstream culture from across the world that have attained iconic queer status, and sets them in the specifically German and Iranian context of the three protagonists' postmigrant queer identities and relationships.

The most important difference between *Beat* and *Futur Drei* is their production. The Jünglinge collective, led by director and co-writer Faraz Shariat, co-writer and producer Paulina Lorenz, and research and casting director Raquel Kishori Molt, emphasizes the broad range of transnational and (post)migrant experiences brought together in the production collective. This production method is transnational in the sense described by Blain and Florvil, in that collective local work is closely engaged with transnational movements without the large budgets of

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major streaming providers. *Futur Drei* is set and filmed in Hildesheim, a medium-sized city near Hannover, in line with an increasing focus in recent film and TV on small-town, rural, and suburban life.[37] The film was financed through grants from nordmedia, a funding body based in Lower Saxony and Bremen, Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein, the city of Hildesheim, parts of its university, and other trusts and foundations. The film benefited locally from the university's renowned Cultural Studies and Cultural Praxis program, which several Jünglinge members studied on.[38] In financing terms, *Futur Drei* is a local production in comparison with *Beat*, but its production collective drew on transnational queer of color and postmigrant perspectives on German society and the German film and music industries. Jünglinge place great importance on the positionalities of cast and crew. They ran an "academy" that brought together all involved, including extras, to share knowledge and expertise, and to disperse filmmaking decisions.[39] Since the film's release, Jünglinge have continued to reflect on this process. Two members of the collective, Molt and Arpana Aischa Berndt, compiled a volume of essays, images, and reflections. It includes criticism of the film, such as a piece by Selin who calls for stories of displacement and forced migration to involve people with those experiences closely, on set and in the cast.[40] By foregrounding positionality and reflection, Molt and Berndt position the film not as a final product, but a point in an ongoing experimentation with activist filmmaking practices.[41] Unlike the reliance on mainstream genre stereotypes in *Beat*, Jünglinge explicitly emphasize the specificity of the milieus they depict in their work.[42] They appeal instead to popular culture with a queer following and with relevance to Shariat's own life experience and the broader Iranian-German context.

The film was among the most successful debut features in Germany in 2020 and, as Shariat has described, made back the money spent on it in mere weeks following its release.[43] It premiered at the 2020 Berlin International Film Festival in its avowedly queer and international Panorama section, and won the Teddy Award for best queer film. Its cinema release in Germany and the UK was affected by the pandemic and, in partnership with distributors Salzgeber and Compulsory Viewing, the collective organized an online streaming launch to explore the potential of a virtual release. The Futur 3.0 Streaming Release Festival was able to reach a broader, more inclusive, and more transnational audience by removing the requirement for cinemagoers to travel to access the film.[44] This format also experimented with ways of creating community among queer postmigrant film viewers in the reception of

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the film. The festival's "watch parties," for example, were preceded by a special watch party for BIPOC viewers on 10 April, hosted by directors and writers Mia Spengler and Aslı Özarslan.[45] By creating space for viewers of color, this online launch format allowed Jünglinge's production methods to be extended to the film's reception, continuing to create space for creators and viewers of color to share experiences and perspectives. Amidst the devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the film industry, Jünglinge and their distributors have continued to explore the transnational appeal of their film and endeavored to create new affiliations and solidarities in the film's reception.

The importance of mainstream popular culture for these transnational queer connections is at the center of the plot of *Futur Drei* too. Its creators depict popular culture as a space of empowerment for queers of color. Their film shows clubbing, singing, and dancing as forms of transnational queer of color creativity, while the straight, white mainstream becomes the irritant as characters face recurring racism. In Fiona Buckland's words, these parties and pop culture more broadly are spaces of "queer world-making," in which "queerness occupie[s] the center" and imagination produces "multiple, fluid possibilities."[46] Music, dancing, and singing do not allow characters to escape the racism of mainstream society, but they are part of characters' attempts to imagine a world centered on queer desires, queer of color perspectives, and transcultural identities. Whereas in *Beat*, the illusory independence of the underground is undercut and the flow of mainstream capitalism and television genres overpowers queer resistance, in *Futur Drei* this resistance is imagined *as* the mainstream. The transnational in this film is not about corrupt or unstoppable flows of capital and violence, but about queer connections, love, and creativity. This creativity manifests itself in production and reception techniques, but also in a stylistic heterogeneity that imagines a new transnational queer mainstream.

The film follows Parvis (Benjamin Radjaipour), a young, gay, Iranian-German man, who is sentenced to community service as an interpreter in a refugee hostel. There he meets Iranian siblings Banafshe (Banafshe Hourmazdi) and Amon (Eidin Jalali), who are awaiting the outcome of their asylum application. All three are queer, although their queerness plays out in different ways. The film follows Parvis from gay bars to Grindr hook-ups until he falls in love with Amon. His queerness is unquestioned by his family or environment, but encountering Banafshe and Amon forces him to realize how his privilege as a middle-class German citizen intersects with his gay male identity. By contrast, the homophobia of other men in the hostel makes Amon uncomfortable

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with publicly acknowledging his queerness and also his sexual and romantic relationship with Parvis. Banafshe's queerness, as Jünglinge have since discussed, is less visible, a fact that gestures to the way that masculine, gay forms of queerness are frequently centered at the expense of bi- or pansexuality or the sexualities of queer women.[47] *Futur Drei* and its characters refuse to present their perspectives as peripheral to a presumed mainstream. The film instead depicts Germany's club scene as a space of queer experimentation and empowerment, rejecting the idea of a single mainstream and focusing, in line with Alison Huber's research, on the specificity and situatedness of each individual's perspective on what is mainstream, hegemonic, or ordinary.[48]

The film's small-scale, queer-coded, often makeshift venues are less implicated in the fight over mainstream or underground status than major clubs like Sonar. They cater to a local audience, rather than the internationally mobile clientele of Berlin's large techno clubs. Yet the film presents these environments as transnational because of, not despite, their local focus. Parvis's family settled in Hildesheim before he was born, and the film is firmly rooted in the town's Iranian diaspora and its middle-class suburbs. White Germans were cast only where whiteness was essential to their characters, as with two of Parvis's lovers early in the film who ask questions about his background and exoticize him based on racial and ethnic stereotypes.[49] Instead, the film depicts the breadth of experiences within Hildesheim's local communities. Refugees like Banafshe and Amon are not on the city's periphery, but are engaged in creating the town's nightlife and shaping the film's view of German society. Their friends and acquaintances are from many different geographic, national, and racial backgrounds: close solidarity between queer characters of color is shown when Banafshe goes to her political discussion group to share the news that she has not been granted asylum. The camera spins slowly on its axis, focusing in a medium close-up on each of her friends seated silently in a circle as they hear Banafshe's news. The soundtrack is silent at first—we see Banafshe's lips move but hear no words—which emphasizes the despair in people's faces and their strong sense of solidarity. Banafshe's political group situates her most firmly of the three main characters in networks of queer of color and feminist activism in this medium-sized city. The group gestures to the affiliations built by people in Germany with experiences of racism and, in the cases of Banafshe and Amon, its asylum system. As in Blain's and Florvil's historical work, this film shows how, even in the most local of contexts, characters bring with them transnational biographies, stories of oppression, displacement, and migration, and close networks with people from different backgrounds.[50] Global

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experiences are foregrounded, and the limitations of white German perspectives lead to them being placed at the periphery of the film's narrative.

The film's closest engagement with discourses around mainstream or underground taste comes during one of Parvis's Grindr hook-ups. He arrives at an older white man's apartment in a smart high-rise block. Its white walls are lined with white shelves full of vinyl records that fill the frame at the back of the room. Parvis's blue and yellow oversized shirt stands out against the white decor and fastidious neatness of the room. His date, Robert , is setting up house records on a turntable to the right of the frame, and is initially silent when Parvis walks in. The music starts quietly with four-to-the-floor beats as the two have a stilted conversation before they start kissing. The track changes abruptly each time the camera cuts to a new shot of them having sex in different parts of the apartment, always with turntables or sound equipment prominent in the shot. This stark editing and sterile setting add to the theatricality of the men's sexual positions and draw on aesthetics from pornography. The encounter is impersonal, and Robert is associated with superficiality and rigidity. His meticulous attention to detail in his apartment and music taste is part of a critical portrayal of whiteness. Robert gets Parvis's name wrong, confusing it with "Pavel" even before they have said anything. After they have sex, he reveals his investment in racial categories and the stereotypes that sustain them, saying: "I think that was the first time I've been with someone like you." He goes on to describe Parvis as a "foreigner" (*Ausländer*) and, when Parvis is nonplussed, he continues: "You know, hairy southern guys. Turks, Greeks, or whatever." Parvis looks away and seems to dissociate briefly, before retorting: "No big deal. I'm actually not that into aging white-bread twinks [*junggebliebene Kartoffeln*] either." In this scene, house music is not underground, but associated with the white middle classes, with racism, and, twenty years after techno's heyday, with "junggebliebene Kartoffeln."[51] Parvis's interaction with his date reveals his everyday struggles against racism as he feels what Ahmed calls the "force" of the mainstream. The film does gesture to a white cultural mainstream, but always with sufficient irony that its power is questioned and challenged. The effect is to render whiteness specific and strange or curious, creating a filmic world where the taken-for-granted perspective is not white, but that of people of color in Germany.

Scenes in clubs and parties, by contrast, create transnational affiliations by celebrating queer forms of mainstream popular culture. Parvis is first introduced outside a club, significantly smaller than Sonar and

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without its performance of an underground aesthetic. Parvis enters the club down a narrow staircase, and the interior is lit up in a pinkish-red light with ultraviolet strobes and green lasers. The palm trees silhouetted in the corner are part of the kitsch of small-town clubs, but also set the interior apart from Germany, perhaps looking to Ibiza as an alternative destination for electronic music. The decor shifts focus away from stereotypes of Berlin's scene and shows how smaller clubs are in touch with transnational sides of the music industry. Parvis's self-presentation in this opening scene also draws on queer of color creativity from around the world. His voguing draws on dance traditions from New York's Black and Latinx drag ball scene and reinvents it for his specific context as a young queer German-Iranian man in a Hildesheim club. In a later scene, Parvis dresses as Japanese manga figure Sailor Moon, another example of the film's appeal to popular culture from outside Germany to create queer affiliations across geographical and linguistic borders.[52] The film imagines clubs not as mainstream or underground, but as a site for queers of color to carve out space for creativity. The club at the opening is set apart from the day-to-day suburban environments of Parvis's life: it is set back from the street down an alleyway and a steep flight of stairs, while the lighting makes its interior indistinct and creates the effect of a dreamscape. Parvis shows confidence and abandon as he dances to camera on his own, while remaining self-aware and conscious of his personal style. The scene is interrupted suddenly when Parvis is kissing a man who stops to ask: "Where are you from, by the way?" This line frames Parvis's experience of clubbing in light of the racism he experiences, and yet he is briefly able to use the club to assert his place in queer worlds beyond his local environment.

Whereas *Beat* explores ideas of flow primarily in the movements of capital and exploitation of North African refugees, *Futur Drei* interrupts the currents of oppression in society for short moments. Long takes like that of Banafshe at her political group or Parvis dancing use film aesthetics to create ways, in Ahmed's words, of "flowing into space" for queer of color characters.[53] Moments of singing, dancing, and partying enable characters to fill and shape the environments around them. These moments often happen in clubs and bars, but just as Parvis is allowed to flow for a moment into the space of the club, Jünglinge extend this effect into the film's other settings. In the scene with Parvis's birthday party, one guest sings a Persian melody "Morghe Sahar" [Nightingale] to the assembled family and friends. Parvis and his sister Mina exchange awkward glances, apparently less than engrossed in the singing, but the older generation listen with rapt attention. The singer

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appears immersed, filmed briefly in close-up with her eyes closed and forehead furrowed to convey the emotions of the song. The slow, unaccompanied melody is a stark change from the techno of the club scene, but it affords a similar pause in the flow of the narrative and allows characters to reflect. As the singing continues, their connections are visualized with a montage of friends and family taking selfies together. Then in the next take, the guests dance to inaudible lively music while the slow unaccompanied song continues. This sequence explores close familial connections and means of "world-making" that center the guests' shared experiences as members of the Iranian diaspora in Germany. In musical interludes throughout the film, *Futur Drei* reimagines the idea of the mainstream, privileging the creativity of queer artists within and outside Germany and the cultures of Iran, Japan, and other countries outside Europe. The film thus creates an archive of queer of color strategies for "flowing into space." Centering Iranian and Iranian-German perspectives, both queer and straight, presents the obsession with the underground in German house and techno, exemplified by Parvis's Grindr date, not as a source of exclusion or belonging, but simply as an absurd curiosity.

After Parvis meets Banafshe and Amon, the film's aesthetic creates further utopian spaces for the three to develop a relationship. The film explores how their partying and queer world-making spill out into the town. After a party in the refugee hostel, Parvis and Banafshe go to a shisha bar and then around the city partying. Banafshe sings and dances to an Iranian song, "Man Amade Am" [I have come to you], under a brightly lit bus station; they both dance on the bus, lifting themselves and twirling around the poles and handles of the bus. They stage a photoshoot in a restaurant among the plates and tables. Amon joins them and they dance and talk in the streets, in underpasses, and on the roof of a parking garage. Throughout this sequence, the camerawork changes substantially. In the bus station, the white overhead lights first dominate the otherwise dark frame and stretch away into the distance. The handcam technique and soft focus contrast with the still shots in the shisha bar; the camera circles around Banafshe, rising and falling in close-up to emulate the pair's drunkenness and Banafshe's energy as she sings. The lighting in these scenes alternates between dark, neon-lit streets, artificial fluorescent lights in the bus station and restaurant, and the grainy dawn light on the roof of the parking garage. The music moves between Banafshe's singing, Iranian pop music on her phone, and an electronic soundscape that emphasizes the playful absurdity of their drunken antics. The frequent use of grainy images, soft focus,

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and disorienting camerawork help to depict their long night and early morning of wandering, dancing, and drunken conversation. The abrupt changes in setting, lighting, and music are representative of the film's heterogeneous aesthetic, which echoes in the film's form the sense that Parvis, Banafshe, and Amon are involved in a process of curating and experimenting with their identities in dialogue with their surroundings. The almost dreamlike settings signal the beginning of a utopian queer friendship that transcends the divisions of citizenship, language, and class. With the film's reminders of everyday racism deferred in this sequence, the three queer protagonists defiantly flow into space in a nocturnal Hildesheim.

The stylized aesthetics of *Futur Drei* are avowedly queer and transnational, and reimagine small-town Germany from queer of color perspectives. While scenes like Parvis's Grindr date suggest an opposition between Parvis as a man of color and Robert's mainstream tastes as a caricatured white house fan, the remainder of the film breaks down this dichotomy. Clubs and parties are a place of experimentation and self-invention, and that spirit of queer world-making and community spills out into the streets. Just as *Beat* is based on the premise that the club does not offer a refuge from the flows of transnational capitalism and exploitation, so *Futur Drei* explores how singing, dancing, clubs, and parties exist within a wider context of transnational connections. Whereas in *Beat*, the underground is inextricably connected to the unstoppable flows of exploitation, *Futur Drei* depicts the world from queer of color perspectives, and refuses to fit them into a model centered on a rigidly bounded mainstream. Here a new center is created, which spills over and transforms ideas about what is and can be mainstream. Jünglinge draw on mainstream popular culture to unite a transnational queer audience from the global majority, and in doing so disrupt the dependence on white perspectives and assumptions in definitions of the mainstream in Germany's club culture.

Conclusion

The most important insight from *Futur Drei* for contemporary Germany screen media is the collective's insistence not only on a queer transnational aesthetic, but on queer transnational production methods. This film is ultimately more successful than *Beat* in its attempts to unsettle heterosexuality and genre conventions, and to disrupt the attempts of streaming providers to mainstream queerness in marketable ways.

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Taken together, these two works serve as a reminder that not all uses of the term "transnational" are the same, and that queer and postmigrant works may need a different approach from other forms of streaming film and television.

Ahmed's queer phenomenology sheds light on the place of queerness in these productions, which normalize queer sexualities, love, and friendships. The emphasis on queer affiliations and collectivity is strong in both films, but while in *Beat* these relationships are shown in opposition to what is presumed to be an oppressive transnational mainstream, *Futur Drei* suggests that those relationships are an important ingredient of the transnational. The praxis of the Jünglinge collective underlines this point, by locating the film's transnational critique of German society in the support, care, and heterogeneity of a diverse and creative group of filmmakers. It is difficult to imagine their activist production methods being scaled up to the budgets and size of an Amazon or a Netflix production, and yet the film has achieved remarkable reach and reception by creating its own queer transnational communities. Shariat has spoken, for example, about the messages he has received from other Sailor Moon fans sharing their queer fan perspectives.[54] These conversations around the film speak to the power of the queer transnational mainstream it envisages, as it draws on a wide range of popular culture with a global fanbase. Just as *Beat* and *Futur Drei* depict and explore these queer affiliations, the reception of *Futur Drei* shows the central role of queer screen media itself in forging and sustaining those transnational queer connections.

In both *Beat* and *Futur Drei*, the transnational is never a category free from the potential for exploitation or violence that transcend national and cultural borders. The transnational is not an ideal but a reality in contemporary Germany for both works, and the question is therefore how to navigate this transnational cultural landscape ethically and responsibly. Kreuzpaintner and Jünglinge show popular culture—including film and television—caught up in systems of inequality, hierarchies, and social privilege or disadvantage. Queer characters and relationships are positioned in both works as blockages within the flow of mainstream norms, albeit in opposite ways. While in *Beat* queerness is a local irritant within the narrative dynamics and the globalized violence around the club scene, *Futur Drei* imagines a small-town scene with transcultural queer intimacies at the center, so that the film itself offers utopian resistance to restrictive oppositions between mainstream and underground, queer and straight, German and non-German.

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The play with genre in particular suggests in these two works that queer, transnational filmmaking must disrupt the easy unfolding of recognizable narratives. *Beat* is part of an exploration by filmmakers across the large platforms of how genres can be reworked, reinvigorated, and unsettled for the streaming age. To many reviewers, this appeared as an attempt to do too much, but if taken seriously, these genre choices draw our attention to the queer dynamics of relationships in *Beat* and their failure against the force of a heteronormative mainstream. The series raises important questions about the extent to which a mainstreaming of queer culture is possible through genre conventions that have historically marginalized queer people. *Futur Drei* answers these questions by looking elsewhere and to other genres for transnational appeal. Manga, Iranian traditional song, Black and Latinx dance traditions, and electronic music from many different parts of the world are brought together into a conscious appeal both to a global queer audience and to an audience in Germany with transnational identities and experiences. Jünglinge show that there is already a repertoire of mainstream culture that forms the basis for queer affiliations, and model just one way of appealing to those global connections as cinema rises to the challenges and opportunities of streaming media. *Futur Drei* sidesteps conventional genre boundaries in favor of a hybrid aesthetic, and its queer-centered production means its focus moves beyond what is recognizable only to funding panels at major platforms or broadcasters, privileging instead the queer recognition in references and pop culture forms that have often been dismissed as too sentimental, too flamboyant, or too niche.

In his discussion of the mainstream, Fred Moten suggests that we direct our focus away from the idea of a rigidly bounded mainstream separated from its margins: "The margin is in this constant, entangled apposition with the stream in its violent disregard of, or sometimes reticent withdrawal from, the very idea of the main."[55] *Beat* and *Futur Drei* stage queer-centered explorations of the intersections between transnational culture and ideas of the mainstream, and in light of these works, Moten's imagery can help redescribe what is so important about the transnational for queer culture in and beyond Germany. As Moten suggests, *Futur Drei* explores the fluid dynamism of a stream that is inseparable from its margins, as both resist and defy the boundaries that define them. Jünglinge do not dispense entirely with what Moten terms "the limit, the bank, the frame," and are still concerned with showing the force of mainstream norms on queer characters of color.[56] But they

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allow characters to move beyond the "idea of the main" and to imagine ways of "flowing into space" on their own terms. In other words, the queer countercurrents of transnational cinema and television already exist and are not radically separate from the mainstream, and nor are they in need of a conscious "mainstreaming" through integration into genres dependent on heterosexuality. These multiple currents exist within use of "transnational" and within the increasing diversity of streaming media. These works show the potential for transnational queer screen media to hold categories of "transnational" and "queer" in balance, to challenge both as they become swept up in the stream's most dominant currents, and to forge new queer affiliations and allegiances in the process.

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Notes

1. The launch of WOW Presents Plus as an international streaming provider for the *RuPaul's Drag Race* (2009–) franchise is an example of this lucrative market. UK broadcasters BBC Three (*Queer Britain*, 2017) and Channel 4 (*Tofu*, 2015), and German broadcaster ARD (*All You Need*, 2021–) and ZDF (*Loving Her*, 2021) have all hosted streaming-only queer productions.
2. See Brennan, "Queerbaiting" [*Journal of Fandom Studies*].
3. Disney+'s US-produced *Love, Victor* (2020–) and ARD series *All You Need* (2021–) are two examples of TV shows that controversially cast straight actors in queer roles.
4. *Sense8* is one example; see Felipe Espinoza Garrido's chapter in this volume. Joseph Brennan frames even queerbaiting as a prompt for creativity: Brennan, "Queerbaiting: The 'Playful' Possibilities."
5. Schofield, "Theatre without Borders?" 235.
6. Charlotte, "Die Teddy-Award-Preisträger*innen 2020"; "Outfest Los Angeles 2020 Award Winners"; Kiang, "'No Hard Feelings': Film Review."

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7. Blain, "Confraternity among all Dark Races."
8. Florvil, *Mobilizing Black Germany*, 130–56. See also El-Tayeb, *European Others*, and Breger, *Making Worlds.*
9. Roxborough, "Amazon Taking German Original."
10. Kreuzpaintner, "Ich bin nur ein Idealist."
11. See Weheliye, "White Brothers With No Soul."
12. Benedict, "'Beat'-Regisseur Kreuzpaintner."
13. "55. Grimme-Preis 2019"; KAE, "Deutsche Serie 'Beat'"; Baines, "Booze, Blood and Berghain."
14. For example, Airen, "Mehr Psychopathen"; Baines, "Booze, Blood and Berghain."
15. Benedict, "'Beat'-Regisseur Kreuzpaintner."
16. Amazon Prime Video Deutschland, *Club-Nacht Home Edition*. With thanks to Elizabeth Ward for this connection.
17. For example, Witzeck, "Es passieren unfassbare Dinge."
18. See Elizabeth Ward's chapter in this volume.
19. On cultural engagements with Berlin, see Webber, *Berlin in the Twentieth Century*. On Berlin in transnational streaming media, see the chapters by Felipe Espinoza Garrido and Benjamin Nickl in this volume.
20. All translations are mine from the spoken German.
21. See Feiereisen and Sassin, "Sounding Out the Symptoms."
22. The series perpetuates stereotypes of East European gangsters in Germany. See Felipe Espinoza Garrido's chapter in this volume, and Graf's *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* and Wachowski, Wachowski and Straczynski's *Sense8*.
23. Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*.
24. See, especially, Baker, Bennett, and Taylor, *Redefining Mainstream Popular Music*.
25. Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 114–15.
26. Ibid., 99.
27. Robb, "Techno in Germany," explores the early arguments about the mainstreaming of techno.
28. Garcia, "Techno-Tourism"; Peter, "Breaching the Divide."
29. See Garcia, "Whose Refuge, This House?"; Feiereisen and Sassin, "Sounding Out the Symptoms."
30. Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 11.
31. Ahmed, *On Being Included*, 208, note 9.
32. Witzeck, "Es passieren unfassbare Dinge."
33. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 65–107.
34. See Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*.
35. For example, Baker, Bennett, and Taylor, *Redefining Mainstream Popular Music*.
36. Toynbee, "Mainstreaming," 150: italics in original.
37. The fictional towns of Rinseln (*How to Sell Drugs Online (Fast)*) and Winden (*Dark*) are recent German examples, as is Charlotte Lindholm's move to Göttingen in *Tatort*. See Lorena Silos Ribas's chapter in this volume. *Futur Drei* is among several recent queer films (e.g., *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*, 2018) interested in community forged by queer people in small-town or rural environments.
38. Shariat, "German-Iranian Director Faraz Shariat."
39. See Berndt and Nguyen, "Behind the Scenes."
40. Selin, "Wer erzählt eigentlich unsere Geschichten?"
41. On *Futur Drei* as decolonial practice, see Stehle and Weber, "Decolonial Queer Futures."
42. Jünglinge Film, "Jünglinge Film UG."

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43. Shariat, "Unconflicting Desires."
44. *Futur 3.0*.
45. "Timetable."
46. Buckland, *Impossible Dance*, 6 and 14.
47. Lorenz and Molt, "Byre World."
48. Huber, "Mainstream as Metaphor," 5.
49. Molt, "Was bedeutet Typecasting?"
50. Blain, "Confraternity among all Dark Races"; Florvil, *Mobilizing Black Germany*.
51. See Hüffell and Ismaiel-Wendt, "Knackendes Eis aka Kristall."
52. See Smith, "*Futur Drei*."
53. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 139.
54. Shariat, "Unconflicting Desires."
55. Moten, *Black and Blur*, 260.
56. Ibid.

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Chapter 9

Looking into the Abyss

The Transnational Puzzle in *Dark*

Lorena Silos Ribas

> We were convinced that it was possible to tell local stories coming out of Germany that could hit an audience anywhere.
>
> —Jantje Friese

It is not always easy to discern the setting of many of the series streamed by Netflix. Several of its most recent shows—such as *The End of the F***ing World* (2017–19), *The Innocent* (2021), and *Élite* (2018–22)—are set in non-places (to borrow loosely the term from the French anthropologist Marc Augé), or, perhaps, more accurately, "somewhere that could be anywhere."[1] This de-localization of many of the series created by Netflix has been deemed one of the main elements of their success worldwide, because their lack of cultural specificity allows viewers to concentrate simply on the plot. As audiences are already familiar with the shows' audiovisual codes as well as with genre conventions and tropes, which are employed throughout the countries of production, they are able to "translate" them without impediments.[2] As a consequence, Netflix viewers can switch from one international series to another without having to make a strong cultural or aesthetic transition. This strategy seems to be key to Netflix's approach to international expansion via global content, as it allows the platform to attract audiences in the 190 countries in which it streams with a single production. However, as will become clear, Netflix's landscapes are not always as neutral as they seem, and its shows are often more culturally loaded than may at first appear to be the case. This is because, in order to find its way onto screens worldwide, Netflix needs to find a balance between

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local and global content, between the national and the transnational. According to lb Bondebjerg, audiences prefer their own national drama production, even if US TV formats are—and have been for several decades—the audiovisual "native language," so to speak, both in Europe and in other parts of the world.[3]

Thus, in addition to producing original content in the US, Netflix also increasingly does so abroad. These "Netflix Originals," as they are known, are then aired synchronously in all 190 countries. One of the most successful non-English-language Netflix Originals to have been produced in the wake of this necessity for new, globally accessible content is *Dark* (2017–20). The series is a perfect example of the success of the Netflix strategy to venture into foreign markets and to co-produce local stories of a "transnational nature" with global appeal:[4] products to which international viewers can relate and that are both understandable and enjoyable across borders, but that still tell a tale inserted in a specific cultural realm.[5] In this respect, *Dark* typifies the "future of television" as Netflix seems to have conceived it.[6] As it is complex, intellectually demanding (albeit not overwhelmingly so), "binge-watchable" and—as this chapter will explore—utterly transnational, *Dark* is part of a growing global audiovisual culture that, thanks to the possibilities offered by streaming platforms and the use of internationally recognizable audiovisual codes, aims for innovative, quality products to please niche audiences of "committed viewers"[7] worldwide. As *Dark* creator Jantje Friese argues: "You have to dare to be more independent, to find a niche. Then you can find your audience all over the world. If you only try to grab the entire German audience, you can't really deliver quality. Looking only at the audience figures in Germany is not good for the product."[8]

As Netflix's first original German-language series, *Dark* has become a milestone in the history of German audiovisual media, enjoying both commercial and critical acclaim and being mentioned in the same breath as highly popular and celebrated shows such as *Twin Peaks* (1990–91) and *Stranger Things* (2016–). In this regard, and as will be explained in the following section, the German series has firmly established itself in the category of what is considered "quality television."[9] Indeed, from the outset, it was the intention of its creators to fashion a product with a particular aesthetic and narrative value, and not mere fodder for a German audience that is accustomed to historical retellings of the war, or "monster-of-the-week" criminal series such as *Tatort* (1970–).[10] As a consequence, the series has not only been a success in its country of production, but, since its release, has managed to attract

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international audiences, with over 90 percent of its viewers coming from outside Germany,[11] many of whom even follow social media recommendations to watch the show in the original German version with subtitles.[12] Indeed, *Dark*'s success, as will become clear, stems from its ability to take elements of German cultural heritage and package them in a way that makes them accessible and engaging for audiences worldwide. It is these qualities that make *Dark* "not so much a German series, but rather the perfect Netflix series."[13] In light of this, and by drawing on research by Mareike Jenner (2018), lb Bondebjerg (2017), and Daniela Schlütz (2016), the purpose of this chapter is to analyze *Dark* against the backdrop of recent media developments, and to reflect upon its reception with regard to quality media and transnationalism.

Complexity, Aesthetics, and Worldwide Audiences

Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all model, like the one that traditionally targeted mass national audiences, particularly US ones,[14] Netflix instead aspires to appeal to niche audiences[15] with "a great variety of individual tastes"[16] in all of the countries in which it delivers its products. This approach allows the company to reach a transnational, individualized mass audience—a policy that has been so effective that it has prompted Neil Landau to observe that "niche is the new mainstream."[17] This strategy is based upon offering products that are both transnationally accessible, as described above, and also respond to the criteria of what is considered to be "quality TV." Although the term "quality TV" was coined in the 1970s by American critics— albeit without ever really defining the term[18]—for decades traditional TV channels could not afford to offer what by today's standards is seen as quality programming, and instead opted for products that appealed to those viewers who were not seeking intricate or perplexing plots, but who were happy to start viewing at any time during the series run without feeling they had missed out on anything. Given that TV shows used to be aired once a week at a particular time, it would not have made economic sense for shows to be long-running or complex, as it would have meant that viewers could not afford to miss a single episode. Instead, "monster-of-the-week" type shows allowed viewers the freedom to tune in to short self-contained narratives that required no catching up. However, as technology has enabled asynchronous and nonlinear viewing, pay-TV channels and, more recently, streaming platforms no longer have to adhere to the constraints of network television, and have

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thus managed to increase the quality of domestic audiovisual products. The critical and commercial successes of shows such as *The Crown* (2016–), *Stranger Things* (2016–), *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017–), and *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2017–22) have changed the media landscape and increased the expectations of audiences and the pressure for content producers. *Dark* can deservedly take its place alongside those shows, having received universal critical acclaim and overwhelming approval by audiences worldwide (Rotten Tomatoes 95 percent, IMDb 8.8) who are in search of "quality TV." The show certainly ticks all the boxes that Schlütz identifies as being necessary for quality television: it is "complex," "hard to turn off" (binge-worthy), and involves, among other criteria, complex serial narratives, multifaceted characters, and enhanced visual qualities,[19] as will be discussed below.

It is not easy to summarize the story told in *Dark*. While the first episode leads the audience to believe that they have encountered yet another "missing-child story" à la Nordic Noir,[20] it soon becomes apparent that this is not a case of "where" the missing boy is but "when," as the show involves travel across time and across dimensions, and entails an intricate family saga, in which everything and everyone seems to be connected. Set in the shadow of a nuclear power plant in the fictional German town of Winden—a name that already foreshadows the twists and loops the viewer is about to encounter[21]—the narrative centers around four families. In the opening episode, the disappearance of Mikkel Nielsen triggers developments that link the looming power plant and the mysterious caves in the forest, which function as a time-portal, with the secrets and lies of those living in Winden. The viewer soon discovers that the series pivots around time travel; but, in *Dark*, time is cyclical, so that the ending has the potential to be the beginning and vice versa. Past, present, and future are intertwined. What is more, there are not only alternate timelines but alternate worlds, meaning that each character can also have multiple alternate selves.

However, *Dark* is not only complex because of its plot, but mainly because of its convoluted narrative arc and its multilayered structure, with numerous subtexts built upon a solid symbolic foundation. This does not presuppose any specific cultural knowledge, but it certainly rewards interpretation and decoding. These subtexts work both visually and within the storyline, and, as will be examined below, refer back to German intellectual and popular history, as well as international mythological and religious sources (the Minotaur and Saint Christopher, among others). This complex narrative arc is the kind of "narrative special effect" that Mittell describes as being one of the qualities of

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complex TV.[22] Such effects captivate viewers and have them intrigued to understand the twists and turns of the narration. In this regard, *Dark* follows in the footsteps of "puzzle films," which have been increasingly popular since the 1990s—*The Usual Suspects* (1995), *Lola rennt* [Run Lola Run] (1998), *Memento* (2000), *The Others* (2001), and *Inception* (2010) to name just a few—which invite audiences to "play along to crack the interpretative codes and make sense of their complex narrative strategies."[23] As Mittel observes, the appeal of these products for the viewer is not necessarily in solving the mystery, like some sort of puzzle, but rather in appreciating the strategies used to manipulate the narrative.[24] Although Mittell argues that not watching a series as it is being broadcast at a weekly pace might isolate viewers and thus not allow them to share a collective experience, this does not seem to be true for *Dark*, which has fans re-creating, interpreting, and theorizing about the series online.[25] The series appears to be an example of how the national collective experience from the 1980s and 1990s has been replaced by a transnational collective experience, with audiences worldwide becoming actively engaged in the developments of the plot, which again fuels the transnational interest in the show thanks to internet platforms and social media. This is common for many contemporary media products, with forums functioning as paratexts, which together with more professional content (blogs, reviews, websites) contribute to the understanding of the storyline and characters,[26] and lend additional "credibility and aura" to the show.[27] In the case of *Dark*, the series has generated a considerable number of paratexts, both by professionals (reviews in the printed and digital press, the *Dark* Netflix official site, TV blogs) and by fans (videos and texts on different topics published on social media, and question-and-answer platforms like Quora and Reddit), with viewers creating family trees for the characters in a bid to untangle the timelines, as well as blogposts during the early seasons speculating on who the ambivalent characters of Adam, Noah, and the Stranger were. The active, multilingual discussions present in these internet sites are proof of the enormous fandom that has grown around the series, and also of its immense impact internationally. *Dark* became a worldwide success soon after its release, and its "travelability"—that is, the demand for a product outside its original market—has been ranked very high in countries as different as the United States, Japan, Russia, and Spain.[28]

As a complex narrative, *Dark* is rich in unexpected twists, and provides numerous foreshadowings and callbacks, which require, and reward, repeated viewing.[29] Indeed, while some allusions to the aforementioned myth of the Minotaur are quite obvious and will be picked

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up by many viewers on first viewing, others are more subtle and only become apparent much later in the series, or are skillfully echoed in the soundtrack, as will be shown below. For example, while Martha, the sister of one of the missing children, Mikkel, performs the role of Ariadne in both worlds, she speaks prophetic words that are clearly linked to her own life. Her performance as Ariadne reveals for the first time in season one an idea that will be explored again in Martha's own life: namely, that the knot that binds her and her boyfriend, Jonas, needs to be severed in order to restore time in the origin world. Other examples of foreshadowing relate to Mikkel, with Martha asking their mother, Katharina, in episode one whether he is adopted (which he eventually will be) or when he wears a skeleton costume, in a clear reference to his death. Moreover, one of the first scenes in episode one features him playing a magic trick on his father: Mikkel makes a pawn disappear under a glass, and, at his father's questioning how he has done it, he answers: "Papa, the question is not how. The question is when?" (S1 E1). This playing with interrogative pronouns is also emulated later by the Stranger, an older time-traveling version of Jonas, who transforms the newspaper headline "Where is Mikkel?" to "When is Mikkel?" What is more, Martha's death in the season two finale is also signaled in advance by the cryptic way that older Jonas/the Stranger looks at the exact spot on the floor on which she will be killed or at the gun that will be used. Likewise, the infinity loop, which symbolizes the character of the Unknown (i.e., Jonas and Martha's offspring), is also a representation of the two worlds being united and eternally recurrent, and is featured on several occasions in the three seasons. It appears on the gravestone of the missing Mads Nielsen, and on the blackboard in the school in both seasons one and three.

Other main plotlines are equally hinted at through visual elements, bonding the narrative and adding to the circular compact nature of the plot. Hence, the existence of an alternate world or a mirrored reality is already pre-empted in *Dark*'s symmetrical opening credits, just as the symbol of the triquetra, a recurrent image in the show, hints at the existence of three different worlds. One of the best-conceived plot points of the series is the multiple appearances across time of a pendant bearing the image of Saint Christopher, the patron saint of travelers, which is not only a subtle allusion to the various time travelers, but, once again, stresses the interconnection of different times and characters. For example, when Hannah finds out she is pregnant with Egon's baby in the 1950s, she initially wants an abortion. In the backstreet "clinic," she meets young Helene Albers and gives her the necklace with the pen-

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dant and introduces herself as Katharina. Helene Albers will eventually bear a child, named Katharina, the mother of Mikkel, Martha, and Magnus. When Katharina travels back in time to search for Mikkel and her husband Ulrich, she is killed by her own mother, who is unaware of their relationship. Before dying, Katharina grabs the necklace from her mother's neck and accidentally buries it in the sand near the lake where Jonas, Martha, Magnus, and their friend Bartosz usually spend their summer evenings. Years later, that necklace is found by Jonas, and eventually gifted back to Martha, who is Helene's granddaughter and—due to the loops of time travel—also Hannah's great-great-great-great-granddaughter. The story has yet another twist: one day in the lake, Bartosz tries to scare Martha by telling her about a dead woman who is supposedly buried in the lake. Little does he know by then that he is referring to Martha's own mother. These "narrative special effects" reward the attentive viewer with the satisfaction of solving the puzzle, and increase their commitment to the show.

Characterization is also crucial to *Dark*'s global success. According to Schlütz, "quality TV" also has to be believable, plausible, and consistent.[30] In this regard, actions and reactions of the characters ought to be those that can be found in the real world, while the plot and its twists need to show consistency. This is possible even within the implausible realms of a science-fiction world because, as Schlütz argues, even if not all of the aforementioned criteria are met, the most important element is that the story is "emotionally realistic."[31] This also contributes to the story being transnationally accessible, as Bondebjerg argues: "Even if a TV drama from a remote part of the world can seem more strange [*sic*] and difficult to understand because of certain cultural and social differences, we do understand characters, roles, emotions and so forth, and thus, to a certain degree, identify with the characters and understand the story world."[32] Viewers of *Dark* from different parts of the world can, for example, easily empathize with a parent losing a child and with the lengths they would go to recover them. "Emotional realism" is also particularly evident in the character development of young Jonas: the innocence of youth is rapidly stolen from him through being confronted with a cruel truth and, as one of the reviewers mentions, "every stare he gives has the weight of two seasons, and hundreds of lifetimes he's now lived."[33] This authenticity and plausibility concerning characters is also reflected in the superb casting of the series: actors performing the same character at different ages bear an uncanny resemblance to one another, so that viewers have no doubt of who that character is, when they first meet them at a different time. Even if they are not immedi-

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ately recognizable, as is arguably the case with Jonas and Claudia and their different iterations, close-ups on their distinguishing marks (scars or heterochromia) lend consistency to the characterization.

Both image and sound are essential aspects of audiovisual storytelling. Visual features and high production values are, according to Schlütz, as important as complex narrative and multifaceted characters for quality TV.[34] Indeed, Schlütz argues that in order to be regarded as quality, a series should make an appropriate narratological use of innovative techniques with regard to photography and sound. Several of those techniques are to be found in *Dark*. Besides the frequent split-screens, which contribute to forging the narrative by showing different epochs and juxtaposing characters at different ages, shots from above are employed in several instances to convey the idea that something or someone is controlling the characters.

The color palette and the use of music also play crucial roles in helping to structure the narration. Firstly, colors contribute to delimiting the different timelines: in the present, 2019, the colors are muted and dull, with gray and brown dominating the color palette; the 1980s, by contrast, are far brighter and more vivid, with predominantly primary colors, whereas the 1950s scenes are tinged with gray and sepia tones, which then turn darker when we travel further back to the 1880s. Yellow is especially saturated in the "present," and plays a crucial role in the narrative: Jonas's yellow raincoat—which alternate Martha then "inherits" and which also makes a brief appearance in the "origin" world—has become an iconic symbol of the show, much like the Dali mask from *Money Heist*. Moreover, the yellow of the time travelers' coat also has symbolic value in that it is mirrored in the yellow radioactive barrels and protective garments in the nuclear plant, the source of the energy that makes time travel in the series possible. Just as nuclear fallout poses a threat to the world, the fallout of Martha and Jonas's relationship—the Unknown—has the potential to become a destructive force for all involved.

Likewise, music is another piece in the puzzle. The somber musical setting is in harmony with the visual scenery, particularly as there is a predominance of night scenes or dark interiors, shady forests, caves, and candle light. The coordination between the visual and musical treatment helps define the oppressive and closed environment from which some characters repeatedly express a wish to escape, all of which contributes to creating a feeling that is present throughout the series and which lends it unity. However, the sound in *Dark* goes far beyond the task of setting the scene. Indeed, as Ben Frost, the composer of the

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soundtrack, observes, the melodies replicate the "cyclical, circular patterns"[35] that are to be found in the narrative, while the main motif in the soundtrack mimics the doppler effect, which is also reflected in the name of one of the protagonist families (the Dopplers), as well as in the dual quality of the characters and in the existence of parallel worlds. Furthermore, while the diegetic sound announces the transitions between times and worlds—very often via a menacing and sinister noise, which is also prominently referenced in the subtitles—the extradiegetic music of the songs included in the soundtrack has been selected both for its musical properties (strings, operatic voices, and industrial and eerie sounds) and because music from a particular period contributes to placing the plot, enabling viewers to know where/when they are. The content of the lyrics is also in keeping with the overarching themes of the show with their references to powerlessness, love, regret, and time: "The Labyrinth Song" (Asad Avidan, 2014, S3 E4), "My Body Is A Cage" (Peter Gabriel, 2010, S2 E8), "If I Could Turn Back Time" (Cher, 1989, S3 E1), "You Spin Me Round" (Dead or Alive, 1984, S1 E1 and S3 E2), and, most importantly, Nena's "Irgendwie, irgendwo, irgendwann" [Somehow, Somewhere, Somewhen] (1984, S1 E1 and S3 E8) are illustrative examples. All these details underpin the content, and contribute to making the narrative arc cohesive, thus also meeting the expectations of a high-quality audiovisual product.

The show's iconic music has also played a key role in *Dark*'s appeal for international audiences, and increased its "travelability" potential. The wealth of information online about the soundtrack attests to how much *Dark*'s choice of music has appealed to audiences worldwide, with dozens of playlists on Spotify and different websites collecting all songs and musical pieces from the show. Music has a communicative effect, particularly among younger generations, and thus contributes to creating a transnational cultural space. This is even more so the case, because most of the soundtrack is in the international language of English. Even in the case of the German songs, such as those by Detlev Lais and Nena, the regional specificity is less important, as they reflect the sounds of a certain period—the 1950s or the 1980s—and are thus also able to transcend language and cultural barriers.

Dark: Transnationalism and Cultural Translatability

For most of its history, television has been utterly national and committed to reinforcing national borders.[36] The onset of streaming platforms,

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however, has contributed to the ongoing process of blurring national cultural borders and has also defined the (self-)perception of European media.[37] As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, in the course of its worldwide expansion, "Netflix has made true efforts of regionalization and nationalization"[38] to please national audiences that have a strong relationship to their own experience of TV and to their own localities. According to Bondebjerg, "[w]e relate much quicker and easier to stories that have a cultural closeness to the kind of society and locality we grew up in and where we perhaps still live. The connection between our own 'stories' and the stories told by creative teams within our own local culture is tighter."[39] On that account, Netflix has tried to please domestic audiences through its non-English-language Netflix Originals, but has still instilled these products with a patina of "transnationalism," in terms of genre tropes, narratological devices, and characterization, which allows them to travel. In so doing, the company has incorporated in these productions the audiovisual codes that audiences feel are part of their native audiovisual tongue: this, in spite of Germany's former reservations,[40] is mostly the audiovisual language from the US and the UK, as Bondebjerg suggests,[41] but more recently also from Scandinavia, due to the popularity of Nordic noir. Such "regional" products are still able to enter international markets because of their adherence to international audiovisual codes and the fact that most local elements are diluted by being "transnationalized."

In this sense, *Dark* has managed to incorporate a "grammar of transnationalism",[42] which makes the German show palatable for international audiences. Such "grammar" implies in this case the adoption of the aforementioned audiovisual codes of complex/quality TV—mainly from the US/UK and Scandinavia—and the presence of "tropes, values and myths which can potentially resonate in any foreign market,"[43] together with a setting that could be almost anywhere (a hospital, a police station, a school), as well as atemporal spaces, like a church or a lodge. However, the show also establishes a dialogue with Germany's cultural and intellectual history, offering additional appeal to domestic viewers. All in all, this results in a compilation of Germany's "greatest hits" in literature and philosophy, sugar-coated with ample references to translatable popular culture, perfectly packaged within the international vocabulary of contemporary media strategies.

It should not take viewers too long to find familiar elements in the visuals of *Dark* that will keep them watching. Nordic noir had already been a staple of German TV even before big shows such as *Forbrydelsen* (The Killing, 2007–12) and *Broen* (The Bridge, 2011–18) became interna-

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tional hits. According to Eichner and Mikos,[44] collaborations between the Danish public broadcaster and ZDF resulted in several series, such as *Livvagterne* (The Protectors, 2009–10), *Ørnen* (The Eagle, 2004–6) and *Den som dræber* (Those Who Kill, 2011), being aired on ZDF's Sunday late-night slot. Moreover, the status of Scandinavian crime-fiction in the country—with names such as Stieg Larsson and Hennig Mankell being top of German bestseller lists—most probably played a role in the positive reception of these shows in Germany. In this respect, *Dark* plays with both the visual language and the conventions of Nordic noir. The influence of Nordic visuals on the appearance of the show is undeniable, with its "dimly-lit aesthetics" and "barren landscapes" reflecting the emotional tone of characters,[45] as is often the case in TV crime shows coming from Scandinavia.[46] In addition, besides the already mentioned "missing child" trope,[47] the construction of characters[48]—most notably, taciturn, and emotionally distant police chiefs Nielsen and Doppler—and the presence of strong female characters also reflect the connection with Nordic shows. Notwithstanding that, the narrative pace in *Dark* is faster than in its northern counterparts, and more closely resembles the editing of American productions, embracing, once again, a more transnational audiovisual approach.

As well as the tone and topoi of Nordic noir, *Dark* also resorts to a range of internationally recognizable elements, which add the complexity that appeals to audiences in search of more demanding TV. These include biblical and mythological references such as the recurrent reference to the myth of Ariadne and the labyrinth. As mentioned above, both Martha and alternate Martha play the character of Ariadne in the school play, and the red thread that Ariadne gives Theseus in the mythological account to help him emerge from the labyrinth after killing the Minotaur is alluded to on different occasions in the show. It is shown repeatedly in the complex cave system as a guiding line to help Jonas—and anyone else—to find his way, but it also links the photographs of the protagonists that are mapped out on a wall in the opening of the first episode, functioning from the very start as a clue that reveals that all characters are somehow interconnected. In German, the term "red thread" (*roter Faden*) refers to the common thread that makes an argument or a story cohesive. In a comparable way, the Ouroboros, the ancient symbol depicting a snake eating its own tail, also has a prevalent presence in the series. In the cave, the Stranger ties the red thread to a ring in the shape of the Ouroboros, and the symbol is also reflected in the bracelet that one of the characters gives to his future wife during their childhood. Thus, in addition to hinting

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at some of the key themes in the show (the eternal cycle of life, end and beginning, death and rebirth), the Ouroboros symbolically hints at the circular nature of the plot. Moreover, scars on Jonas's body—which are shown time and again—also have a mythological/biblical resonance, as they echo Ulysses' arrival at Ithaca, when his nursemaid recognizes him from the scar on his leg, and also the scene in the Gospel according to John, when the apostle Thomas recognizes Jesus from the scars in his hands and side. Such iconic devices, which, as previously discussed, contribute to forging the plotline and carry great symbolic weight, are mixed together with pop-culture references.

Albeit not in the same naive way as *Stranger Things* (a Netflix show it is often compared with), *Dark* also re-creates a "make-believe land of the 1980s," with iconic cultural products that could easily be recognized anywhere, and which support a certain "cultural proximity" (Straubhaar) or cultural nostalgia for Netflix consumers. The thesis that streaming platforms—just like film or television before them—capitalize on nostalgia is not new (cf. Pallister); they do so in order to develop a sense of community and/or generational identity in viewers. While remakes, reboots, prequels and sequels are all re-creations that exploit the positive memory left among audiences by a particular show, programs might also be intrinsically nostalgic, by aiming to evoke in audiences feelings of "yearning for a time period they might feel attached to," both directly and vicariously.[49] Shows such as *Little House on the Prairie* in the 1970s, and *Brooklyn Bridge* in the 1990s, have benefited from this yearning for times past. They are part of a collective nostalgic response that, as Pallister affirms, is born in the "mediated knowledge of that earlier time period and its popular culture."[50] Shows streamed by Netflix also lean on this collective cultural nostalgia: *Stranger Things* (2016–), *The Crown* (2016–), *Cable Girls* (2017–20), and *Dark* are evident examples of Netflix's strategy to feed viewers with a subjective/emotional viewing experience, in which they can either relate to the period that the show is set in or find comfort from the ideas and values linked to that era.[51] Furthermore, as Schwindt remarks, nostalgic shows also respond to the company's wish to gain the attention of Generation X and baby boomers for their market.[52] Precisely the viewers pertaining to those generations would be the ones to recognize in *Dark* such references to the antinuclear Smiling Sun, Rubik's Cube, allusions to films such as *Back to the Future* (1985) and *The Goonies* (1985), and comics (*Captain Future*), or the portrayal of fashion, with fuzzy hairstyles and varsity jackets—the last of which is an example of an object that "travels well" among cultural realms, due to its omnipresence in pop-

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ular US high-school movies of the 1980s and 1990s, such as *Teenwolf* (1985) and *The Breakfast Club* (1985). The recurring references to bars of Raider chocolate as clues within the narrative are primarily meant for domestic audiences, who will remember that Twix bars were called Raider in Germany until 1991. Even if international or younger viewers cannot decipher those cues, the references will nonetheless resonate with them, particularly through the Raider TV advertisement that appears in the show with its unmistakable 1980s aesthetics. Similarly, attentive Generation X-ers will relate the Ouroboros to the cover of Michael Ende's *Die unendliche Geschichte* (1979), the most internationally successful example of German young-adult fiction at the time. The two snakes biting their tails also decorate a medallion that is central to the plot of the novel, and are one of the many symbols in Ende's story that refer to a circular conception of the world. Additionally, besides these transnational and international references, there are other elements of the show that are utterly a part of contemporary German sociocultural history: Helmut Kohl posters for the 1987 election campaign, German bus stops, green German police cars, Hawaii Toast, white socks with sandals, queues at bakeries, and Reclam books, among others. However, even if such local elements function as mnemonic topoi for nostalgic purposes, as suggested above, they are also made accessible to international viewers. Throughout the series, there is an attempt to eliminate cultural borders and to translate regionally bound devices. Thus, international viewers might not recognize the politician in the poster, but his style and the fact that his poster shares a space with the 1980s band Modern Talking contribute to situating him in a certain epoch; the same happens with the retro-looking police VW Golf, the 1 *Pfennig* coin or the Hawaii Toast, introduced as "comfort food" and easily understood as the equivalent of "mac'n'cheese" or similar for US viewers.

Equally transnational is Netflix's thematization of contemporary issues and the attempt to incorporate diversity within its original shows. Jenner refers to the inclusion of (loosely defined) "Western values,"[53] which have become distinctive for streaming platforms—sometimes in a manner that defies their wish for plausibility. In *Dark,* there is a well-defined effort to portray female empowerment—with women appearing in meaningful, leading roles, and advancing the storyline—and to include traditionally underrepresented groups such as homosexual and transgender characters, as well as individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, as a dystopian narrative, *Dark* pivots around a social concern and, thus, echoes the debate around nuclear power, with mentions of Chernobyl, acid rain, and cases of cancer, even before the nuclear

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meltdown portrayed in the show. Moreover, the plotline is strongly aligned with the decommissioning of the nuclear power plant and the role of nuclear power in enabling time travel. In this regard, in an interview, *Dark*'s creators acknowledged that they were inspired by their own childhoods in small German towns during the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986 in Ukraine, when the release of radioactive materials over Europe spurred widespread fears of contamination and further accidents. According to bo Odar, such fear is "a very German, or European, feeling that Americans don't get, because they [have] never had fallout like that."[54] However, further events—such as the accident at Fukushima, and the ongoing debate worldwide over the safety of nuclear plants, together with the global success of *Chernobyl*, the series launched by HBO in May 2019—have contributed to widespread suspicion of nuclear power in other countries, making nuclear plants, particularly when they are depicted in the threatening way they appear in *Dark*, creepier transnationally.

Nonetheless, even if *Dark* adapts to the norms of a "grammar of transnationalism" and its narrative is meant to become universal, Jenner argues that Netflix products also "remain geographically and ideologically bound."[55] This is a claim that *Dark* viewers, and also its creators, would agree with. "I've heard several times that *Dark* is designed in such a way that it could theoretically play anywhere, but it still has many unmistakably German elements," a Reddit user expressed, while bo Odar declared in an interview that there was something "inherently German about the whole thing."[56] Indeed, beyond the various German pop-cultural references at a surface level, *Dark* also reflects upon prominent philosophical and literary developments in German intellectual history, which, together with the quality criteria already mentioned, further its value as an audiovisual product. The viewer is not confronted with a charming whodunit or time-travel story like *Back to the Future*, with its continuous humorous remarks, but rather with an intellectually engaging piece, which demands sustained, rational involvement.

In this respect, the series is rich in motifs and themes associated with nineteenth-century German literature and thought. This was a period when the German-speaking cultural realm gained international fame through its literary, musical, and philosophical accomplishments, which notably revolved around individual freedom and the search for the absolute, in its multiple forms. Both of these themes are extensively elaborated in *Dark*. Indeed, co-creator Friese herself admitted in an interview that German philosophy was the one thing she felt a German produc-

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tion could offer Netflix's international audiences.[57] And, so, many ideas found in Goethe, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer—all referenced in the show—are presented in *Dark* in a diluted form, which makes them accessible both to national and international viewers. The beginning of a number of episodes includes intertexts with quotes by Albert Einstein, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Friedrich Nietzsche that support the narrative arc by becoming a guide to the plot. Whereas this recourse might seem an easy strategy to capture younger audiences in search of a nice phrase to enhance their status on social media, the show itself develops ideas set out by the main philosophers of the nineteenth century. Among other philosophical aspects that are discussed throughout the series, the central one is the dichotomy between determinism and free will, which is linked to the idea of the "eternal return," as depicted by Friedrich Nietzsche, and which finds an echo in the cyclical scheme of the narrative. This also seems to portray the confrontation between the beliefs of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, whose system of ideas is embodied by the protagonists, Jonas/Adam and Martha/Eva. Both feel trapped in a cycle of suffering and desperation, but, while Adam only aims to destroy "all servitude to [our] feelings" (S2 E7) to reach peace in the form of nothingness—a very Schopenhauerian thought—Eva still holds to the hope of love. She wishes to repeat the cycle endlessly, for the sake of life, even if that entails sorrow and misery for her and her loved ones. In the final chapter, there is a hint at Schopenhauer's paradigm prevailing over Nietzsche's, when Hannah, Jonas's mother, pronounces the words: "And then everything was suddenly dark and somehow the world had come to an end . . . And the weird thing is that it felt very good for everything to be over, like suddenly being free of everything. No wants. No needs. Unending darkness. No yesterday, no today, no tomorrow. Nothing" (S3 E8). This final "Schopenhauerian turn" at the dinner table in the last episode seems to embody precisely what *Dark* brings about: the "popularization" of German philosophy among audiences who discuss metaphysical and ethical issues in relation to the show, and, in so doing, build a transnational community, which finds its home on internet sites dedicated to the series.

Beyond its engagement with the German philosophical tradition, the series also reflects several literary trends of the nineteenth century, which have largely traveled beyond the German-speaking regions.[58] These originate mostly in the Romantic—and particularly in the Dark Romantic—literary tradition, and play a crucial role in the series, both visually and narratively. Literary resources and motifs such is the wanderer on a quest (archetypal for the Romantics, and famously repre-

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sented by Caspar David Friedrich in his painting "Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer" [Wanderer above the Sea of Fog] 1818), the relevant role of nature (most particularly of woods, caves, and paths) and the notion of *Waldeinsamkeit* [the feeling of solitude in the forest], and the uncanny idea of the *Doppelgänger* as the reverse of our own self, are all key concepts in the show. The concept of *Waldeinsamkeit*, which is linked to the German tradition of the *Märchen* [fairy tales] and is central to the writings of Joseph von Eichendorff and Ludwig Tieck—in whose tale "Der blonde Eckbert" (1797) the term appeared for the first time—has been received in other cultural traditions, most memorably by Henry David Thoreau (in his celebrated *Walden*, 1854) and Ralph Waldo Emerson, who wrote a poem entitled "Waldeinsamkeit" (1858). The notion is also present in several paintings by Caspar David Friedrich, whose representations of solitude resonate in the numerous images in *Dark* in which the protagonists are depicted on their own, with their back to the viewer and surrounded by nature, mostly in the forest. In this regard, nature in *Dark* is also linked to the Dark Romantic. Just as in the popular tales collected by the Grimm Brothers, in which the forest is the setting for spooky and terrible events, the forest in *Dark* can also be a threatening place: it is witness to children being abducted and found dead, it is the place from which the most ominous characters emerge, and, rather than being a place in which one can find oneself in a metaphorical sense, it is the place in which characters literally find themselves by meeting their uncanny doubles. Furthermore, the series also plays with another trope of the Dark Romantic tradition, namely the vague boundaries between dream and reality, thereby adding to the feeling of uncertainty experienced by the characters. In this regard, the series seems to replicate the atmosphere of texts written by E.T.A. Hoffmann, which often display split personalities, the existence of Doppelgänger, or the feeling of losing a grasp of one's identity or even of reality itself. All of these elements convey to viewers a sense of the uncanny, which is also sustained by symbolical repetitions (dialogues that are replicated in different times and in different worlds, mirroring images of mothers and daughters, or the ubiquitous yellow raincoat), which grant unity to the atmosphere in the show. The plot also confronts characters time and again with their Doppelgänger: sometimes, these "doubles" are they themselves, albeit at a different age; on other occasions, they are confronted with their offspring or relatives, who remind them of their former self and a former time. However, not even killing their own parents (Claudia/Egon, Hanno/Bartosz, Adam/Han-

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nah) or younger selves (Helge Doppler)—which links back with the idea of predestination—is going to prevent those precise events that they want to avoid happening.

In this respect, as Jenner notes, genre can become a medium to "formulate a transnational version of history" by obliquely tackling problematic issues, rather than addressing them directly in a more accurate representation.[59] It is my contention that *Dark*, making use of the mystery/science-fiction genre, replicates the intergenerational debate that existed in Germany during the twentieth century without directly addressing it, and to do so employs notions and beliefs from the country's own literary and philosophical tradition. As seen above, decision making plays a central role in the show, with individuals being forced into having to make difficult choices. However, active choices are eventually shown to be an illusion, because events will repeat themselves perpetually, no matter what actions or decisions are taken—even if one decides, for example, to kill one's younger self. To date, German film and TV shows that have gained recognition abroad have tended to be set during the Nazi regime or the postwar period; even films that are not ostensibly set in those times, such as *Die Welle* [The Wave] (2008) and *Das Experiment* [The Experiment] (2001), nonetheless examine the way that people can become *Mitläufer* [followers] and supporters of immoral behavior. Few German films that have been successful abroad have not dealt with those themes of individuals being swept along by, and complicit in, the system, with *Lola rennt* (1998) and *Toni Erdmann* (2016) being notable exceptions.

In *Dark*, the 33-year-cycle allows the series—whether intentionally or not—to *avoid* those episodes in history that would be more familiar to international audiences, namely the Third Reich and the GDR. Nonetheless, their presence feels like the elephant in the room in the series. The war, for example, is subtly introduced in the very first shots of the very first episode, which features the bunker that will then play a central role, as well as close-ups of masks, grenades, and gothic font in the inscriptions on the wall. Further aspects relating to the war permeate the whole series: for instance, missing father figures, the cover-up after the war in the 1950s, and the apocalyptic atmosphere in the future, which relates both to the threat of nuclear power, but also to the fear of a nuclear conflict between the USSR and the United States, which loomed large during the Cold War period.

The introduction of the philosophical debate over personal free will seems to be particularly revealing in a series in which the younger gen-

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eration travels back in time to find out that they, and not their parents, are indeed the cause of the ills of the world. In this regard, the series appears to question the reproaches made by younger generations of the older generation with regard to their past behaviors—that is, their culpability in the events that defined the first half of the twentieth century. Friese herself hints at this possibility:

> We feel delving into those dark themes has a lot to do with who we are and what happened in the first years of the last century, when basically there were two world wars and lots of people were killed in the name of Germans. It's something that we, as the younger generation, talked about extensively in school and always with the question, how could this happen? How can people actually do such dark and creepy things? I think those themes, the darkness in human behavior itself, is something that is very German.[60]

This darkness is certainly given expression in the series, albeit not directly in relation to specific historical events, but rather indirectly via a science-fiction narrative that incorporates philosophical approaches regarding the role of the individual in shaping history.

Conclusion

This localization of content, which in *Dark* involves integrating elements of Germany's popular culture and intellectual history into the show, is part of the Netflix strategy to expand through international markets. As shown above, and as Bondebjerg suggests, audiences appreciate local flavor in their media products. Thus, the company (more so than other streaming services, such as Disney+ or Amazon Prime Video) has attempted to respond to such market specificities through its non-English-language Netflix Originals. As part of its international organizational plan—which also involves a physical presence in several European capitals, for example[61]—Netflix has achieved a cultural balancing act by incorporating into its shows both local and global ingredients, so that its products adhere to the "grammar of transnationalism" (Jenner), making them particularly appealing to local audiences, but also palatable to those viewing around the world.

In the case of *Dark*, the use of internationally recognizable genre codes, quality visuals, the allure of nostalgia, and an absorbing, complex narrative, rich in transnationally recognizable symbols and tropes

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that engage niche audiences worldwide, has allowed Netflix to also introduce regional specificities, which might be less familiar internationally. These include nods to popular culture, such as music, media, food, and props, as well as narratives that have their basis in the German philosophical and literary tradition of the nineteenth century, encompassing notions such as free will and determinism, and the existence of the absolute. While these elements might not be as familiar to international audiences as those they are typically exposed to in German films and series, such as the war or life behind the Berlin Wall, the truth is that they may not be so surprising either. After all, as Friese herself notes in her interview, there exist certain preconceptions about Germany, which they, as creators and producers, played with: "I don't know if it's German angst, but there is something uniquely creepy about Germans, at least from the outside perspective. . . We are definitely delivering on that."[62] In this respect, *Dark* seems to fit into a German cultural tradition of angst and *Weltschmerz*,[63] the implications of which were examined by several of the philosophers who feature in the series, frequently thematized by the Romantics, and defined the painful coming to terms with the past throughout the twentieth century. In this regard, then, the series offers its viewers a perfect mix of sensibility, complexity, and depth—exactly what they would expect from the *Land der Dichter und Denker*, the land of poets and thinkers.

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Notes

1. Webb, "Netflix's New Series."
2. Sanguino, "Todas las ciudades."
3. Bondebjerg, "Transnational Europe."
4. Jenner, *Re-invention*, 242.
5. This balance of the foreign with the familiar is in keeping with the recipe for success identified by Seeßlen for foreign films at the Academy Awards; see Seeßlen "So gewinnt man."
6. Cornils, "Streamingmärchen"; Rolling Stone, "Goethe als Ghostbusters."
7. Zündel, "TV IV," 19.
8. Reinhardt, "*Tatort*."
9. "Quality television" is a rather complex term, difficult to define and often deemed controversial (see Bayo Moriones, Etayo, and Sánchez-Tabernero, "Quality TV," and Jenner, "Binge-watching"). For the purposes of this chapter, quality TV refers to shows that display sufficient artistry, show complexity at a narratological level, and have also received popular and critical acclaim.
10. Ibid.
11. Roettgers, "*Dark* may be from Germany."
12. Schmid, "Untertitel."
13. Cornils, "Streamingmärchen."
14. Cf. Jenner, *Re-invention*, 186.
15. What exactly that niche entails remains unclear. However, a look at the tags under which *Dark* has been cataloged on Netflix reveals that the series is likely to appeal to those looking for "genres" such as "German," "TV Mysteries," "Crime TV Shows," "Sci-Fi TV," "TV Thrillers," and "TV Dramas," or media products that respond to categories like "mind-bending," "chilling," "ominous," "cerebral," "scary," and "suspenseful," as those are the tags that *Dark* has been categorized under.
16. Zündel, "TV IV," 15.
17. Landau, "Outside the Box," 137.
18. Schlütz, "Contemporary Quality TV," 97.
19. Ibid., 100.
20. *Dark* was released shortly after German national broadcaster Das Erste aired *Das Verschwinden* (Hans-Christian Schmid, 2017), a miniseries that also deals with the shadow of a disappearance in a backwoods locale.
21. In German, the verb *winden* means "to writhe" or "to twist," as the series so often does.
22. Mittell, *Complex TV*, 43.
23. Ibid., 39.
24. Ibid., 51; Bundel, "*Dark* Season 3."
25. Mittell, *Complex TV*, 40.
26. Cf. Kozloff, "Narrative Theory," 80.
27. Cf. Schlütz, "Contemporary Quality TV," 102.
28. See tv.parrotanalytics.com for specific data on demand for the series in these and other countries.
29. Cf. Wigley, "Burning Questions."
30. Schlütz, "Contemporary Quality TV," 102.
31. Ibid., 114.
32. Bondebjerg, "Transnational Europe," 50.

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33. Frank, "A Drop in the Ocean."
34. Schlütz, "Contemporary Quality TV," 103.
35. Clarke, "Ben Frost."
36. Chalaby, "From Internationalization."
37. Bondebjerg, "Transnational Europe."
38. Jenner, *Re-invention*, 213.
39. Bondebjerg, "Transnational Europe," 28.
40. Krauß, "Quality Series," 50.
41. Bondebjerg, "Transnational Europe," 26.
42. Jenner, *Re-invention*, 194.
43. Olson, "Hollywood Planet," 118.
44. Eichner and Mikos, "Popularity of Nordic Noir."
45. Cf. Creeber, "Killing"; Hansen, "Euro Noir," 276.
46. Scandinavian productions from the last few decades and *Dark* have been linked to the same "forefathers," namely David Fincher and David Lynch (cf. Hansen, "Euro Noir"), with regard to their use of aesthetics and narrative strategies. Indeed, the transcultural dialogue between US and Nordic media seems to conform to a process of "inward absorption" and "outward reabsorption." While Nordic noir has traditionally been influenced by Anglo-American crime fiction, recently its aesthetics and narratological devices define many audiovisual products from the US and the UK, such as *Broadchurch* (2013–17, ITV), *True Detective* (2014–19, HBO) and, most recently, *The Stranger* and *Safe* (both Harlan Coben adaptations, which were produced and streamed by Netflix in 2020 and 2018 respectively).
47. Hansen, "Euro Noir," 278.
48. Bondebjerg, "Transnational Europe," 116–19.
49. Sirianni, "Nostalgic Things," 187.
50. Pallister, *Netflix Nostalgia*, 3.
51. In this respect, it is remarkable that the 1980s are still Germans' favorite decade. According to a survey commissioned by the German news agency DPA, Germans remember the 1980s with a deep sense of nostalgia. Schikora, "80er Jahre."
52. Schwindt, "*Stranger Things*."
53. Jenner, *Re-invention*, 226.
54. Rogers, "New Border."
55. Jenner, *Re-invention*, 227.
56. Whitehouse, "We spoke to the creators."
57. Nguyen, "Co-creator."
58. Exactly this idea of crossing cultural borders and making art universal was already of importance in literary circles at the time, e.g., the early Romantics with their concept of *progressive Universalpoesie* [universal poetry] (Schlegel) and J.W. Goethe, who promoted the idea of a *Weltliteratur* [world literature] that looked beyond "the narrow circle that surrounds us." Interestingly, just as Goethe looked to the "ancient Greeks, in whose works the beauty of mankind is constantly represented" as a model, *Dark* also embraces Greek tragedy in its treatments of notions such as fate and loss. Goethe, "Conversations on World Literature," quoted by Damrosch, *Comparative Literature*, 23.
59. Jenner, *Re-invention*, 228.
60. Whitehouse, "We spoke to the creators."
61. Iordache, "Transnationalisation," 8.
62. Whitehouse, "We spoke to the creators."
63. Flackett, "Angst."

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Filmography

Film productions are listed according to title, director, and year of release. Television and streaming series are listed according to title, showrunner, and year(s) of release.

4 Blocks (Hanno Hackfort, Bob Konrad, and Richard Kropf, 2017–19).
10 Things I Hate About You (Gil Junger, 1999)
Abschied von Gestern [Yesterday Girl] (Alexander Kluge, 1966).
All You Need (Benjamin Gutsche, 2021).
Amadeus (Milos Forman, 1984).
Amar te Duele [Love Hurts] (Fernando Sariñana, 2002).
Am grünen Strand der Spree [On the Green Banks of the Spree] (Fritz Umgelter, 1960).
Amour [Love] (Michael Haneke, 2012).
Annette (Leos Carax, 2021).
Babylon Berlin (Henk Handloegten, Achim von Borries, and Tom Tykwer, 2017–).
Back to the Future (Robert Zemeckis, 1985).
Bad Banks (Oliver Kienle, 2018–20).
Barbaren [Barbarians] (Andreas Heckmann, Arne Nolting, and Jan Martin Scharf, 2020–).
Beat (Marco Kreuzpaintner, 2018).
Beck (Rolf Börjlind, 1997–).
Berlin Alexanderplatz (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1980).
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Berlin Station (Olen Steinhauer, 2016–19).
Biohackers (Christian Ditter, 2020–).
Breaking Bad (Vince Gilligan, 2008–13).
Bridge of Spies (Steven Spielberg, 2015).
Bridgerton (Chris Van Dusen and Shonda Rhimes, 2020–).
Bridget Jones's Diary (Sharon Maguire, 2001).
Bright Star (Jane Campion, 2009).
Broadchurch (Chris Chibnall, 2013–17).
Broen [The Bridge] (Hans Rosenfeldt, 2011–18).
Brooklyn Bridge (Gary David Goldberg, 1991–93).
Brot [The Valhalla Murders] (Þorður Pálsson, 2019–20).

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Capote (Bennett Miller, 2005).
Casualty (Jeremy Brock and Paul Unwin, 1986–).
Charité (Dorothee Schön, 2017–).
Chernobyl (Craig Mazin, 2019).
Chicago Hope (David E. Kelley, 1994–2000).
Chilling Adventures of Sabrina (Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, 2018–20).
Christiane F. Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo [Christiane F.] (Uli Edel, 1981).
Cloud Atlas (Lana Wachowski, Lilly Wachowski, and Tom Tykwer, 2012).
Clueless (Amy Heckerling, 1995).
Coming Out (Heiner Carow, 1989).
Counterpart (Justin Marks, 2017–19).
Dallas (David Jacobs, 1978–91).
Dark (Baran bo Odar and Jantje Friese, 2017–20).
Das Adlon. Eine Familiensaga [Hotel Adlon. A Family Saga] (Uli Edel, 2013).
Das Boot [The Boat] (Wolfgang Petersen, 1981).
Das Experiment [The Experiment] (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2001).
Das Geheimnis der sechs Spielkarten [The Secret of the Six Cards] (William Kahn, 1920–21).
Das indische Grabmal [The Indian Tomb] (Joe May, 1921).
Das Leben der Anderen [The Lives of Others] (Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006).
Das Verschwinden (Hans-Christian Schmid, 2017).
Das weiße Band [The White Ribbon] (Michael Haneke, 2009).
Den som dræber [Those Who Kill] (Elsebeth Egholm and Stefan Jaworski, 2011).
Der Baader Meinhof Komplex [The Baader Meinhof Complex] (Uli Edel, 2008).
Der Bergdoktor [The Mountain Doctor] (Philipp Roth, 1992–97 and 2008–).
Der bewegte Mann [The Most Desired Man] (Sönke Wortmann, 1994).
Der ewige Jude [The Wandering Jew] (Fritz Hippler, 1940).
Der junge Törless [Young Törless] (Volker Schlöndorff, 1966).
Der Lack ist ab [The Varnish Is Off] (Kai Wiesinger, 2015–18).
Der Landarzt [The Country Doctor] (Herbert Lichtenfeld, 1987–2013).
Der Mann ohne Namen [Peter Voss, Thief of Millions] (Georg Jacoby, 1921).
Der Palast [The Palace] (Rodica Doehnert and Friedrich Wildfeuer, 2021).
Der Richter und sein Henker [The Judge and His Hangman] (Franz Peter Wirth, 1957).
Derrick (Herbert Reinecker, 1974–98).
Der Tunnel [The Tunnel] (Roland Suso Richter, 2001).
Der Untergang [Downfall] (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2004).
Deutschland 83 (Anna Winger and Jörg Winger, 2015).
Deutschland 86 (Anna Winger and Jörg Winger, 2018).
Deutschland 89 (Anna Winger and Jörg Winger, 2020).
Die Abenteurerin von Monte Carlo [The Adventuress of Monte Carlo] (Adolf Gärtner, 1921).
Die Blechtrommel [The Tin Drum] (Volker Schlöndorff, 1979).
Die drei Mädels von der Tankstelle [The Three Gals From the Filling Station] (Peter F. Bringmann, 1996)

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Die Ehe der Maria Braun [The Marriage of Maria Braun] (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1979).
Die Entdeckung der Currywurst [The Invention of Curried Sausage] (Ulla Wagner, 2008).
Die Flucht [March of Millions] (Kai Wessel, 2007).
Die geliebten Schwestern [Beloved Sisters] (Dominik Graf, 2014).
Die Herrin der Welt [The Mistress of the World] (Joe May, 1919).
Die Leiden des jungen Werthers [The Sorrows of Young Werther] (Egon Günther, 1976).
Die Luftbrücke—Nur der Himmel war frei [Berlin Airlift] (Dror Zahavi, 2005).
Die Mauer—Berlin '61 [The Wall] (Hartmut Schoen, 2006).
Die Mörder sind unter uns [The Murderers Are Among Us] (Wolfgang Staudte, 1946).
Die Schwarzwaldklinik [The Black Forest Clinic] (Herbert Lichtenfeld, 1984–89).
Die Sturmflut [Storm Tide] (Jorgo Papavassiliou, 2006).
Die unendliche Geschichte [The Neverending Story] (Wolfgang Petersen, 1984).
Die Welle [The Wave] (Dennis Gansel, 2008).
Django Unchained (Quentin Tarantino, 2012).
Doctors (Chris Murray, 2000–).
Dogs of Berlin (Christian Alvart, 2018).
Doktor Knock (oder Der Triumph der Medizin) [Doctor Knock] (Dominik Graf, 1996).
Dresden (Roland Suso Richter, 2006).
Dr. Stefan Frank—Der Arzt, dem die Frauen vertrauen [Dr. Stefan Frank: The Doctor Women Trust] (Mark Rosenberg, 1995–2001).
Dynasty (Esther Shapiro and Richard Alan Shapiro, 1981–89).
Eldorado KaDeWe—Jetzt ist unsere Zeit [Eldorado KaDeWe: Now Is Our Time] (Julia von Heinz, 2021).
El Inocente [The Innocent] (Oriol Paulo, 2021).
Élite (Darío Madrona and Carlos Montero, 2018–).
Emilia (Henrik Pfeifer, 2005).
Emily in Paris (Darren Star, 2020–).
Emma (Douglas McGrath, 1996).
Emmanuelle 1–7 (Just Jaeckin et al., 1974–93).
ER (Michael Crichton, 1994–2009).
Er ist wieder da [Look Who's Back] (David Wnendt, 2015).
Es [It] (Ulrich Schamoni, 1966).
Fontane Effi Briest [Fontane Effi Briest] (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1974).
Forbrydelsen [The Killing] (Søren Sveistrup, 2007–12).
Freud (Marvin Kren, 2020).
From Hell (Albert Hughes and Allen Hughes, 2001).
Für alle Fälle Stefanie [For All Cases Stefanie] (Werner Krämer, 1995–2004).
Futur Drei [No Hard Feelings] (Faraz Shariat, 2020).
Go (Doug Liman, 1999).
Goethe! [Young Goethe in Love] (Philipp Stölzl, 2010).
Good Bye Lenin! (Wolfgang Becker, 2003).
Grey's Anatomy (Shonda Rhimes, 2005–).

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Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten [Good Times, Bad Times] (Guido Reinhardt and Rainer Wemcken, 1992–).
Hamlet (Michael Almereyda, 2000).
Händler der vier Jahreszeiten [The Merchant of Four Seasons] (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1971).
Hanna (Joe Wright, 2011).
Herr Lehmann [Berlin Blues] (Leander Haußmann, 2004).
Hiroshima mon amour [Hiroshima My Love] (Alain Resnais, 1959).
Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland [Hitler: A Film from Germany] (Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, 1977–80).
Holby City (Tony McHale and Mal Young, 1999–2022).
Homeland (Alex Gansa and Howard Gordon, 2011–20).
Homunculus (Rippert, 1916).
Hostel (Eli Roth, 2005).
Hotel Berlin (Peter Godfrey, 1943).
How to Sell Drugs Online (Fast) (Philipp Kässbohrer and Matthias Murmann, 2019–21).
Iago (Volfango de Biasi, 2009).
Ich bin dein Mensch [I'm Your Man] (Maria Schrader, 2021).
Im Angesicht des Verbrechens [In the Face of Crime] (Dominik Graf, 2010).
Im Westen nichts Neues [All Quiet on the Western Front] (Edward Berger, 2022).
In aller Freundschaft [In All Friendship] (Franka Bauer, 1998–).
Inception (Christopher Nolan, 2010).
Inglourious Basterds (Quentin Tarantino, 2009).
Iron Sky (Timo Vuorensola, 2012).
It's a Sin (Peter Hoar, 2021).
Jakob der Lügner [Jakob the Liar] (Frank Beyer, 1974).
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Jojo Rabbit (Taika Waititi, 2019).
Kabale und Liebe [Intrigue and Love] (Friedrich Fehér, 1913).
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Karppi [Deadwind] (Rike Jokela, 2018–21).
King of Stonks (Jan Bonny, Philipp Kässbohrer, and Matthias Murmann, 2022).
Kleo (Hanno Hackfort, Bob Konrad, and Richard Kropf, 2022).
Knight Rider (Glen A. Larson, 1982–86).
Krupp—Eine deutsche Familie [Krupp: A Family between War and Peace] (Carlo Rola, 2009).
Ku'damm 56 (Annette Hess, 2016).
Ku'damm 59 (Annette Hess, 2018).
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La casa de papel [Money Heist] (Álex Pina, 2017–21).
Las chicas del cable [Cable Girls] (Ramón Campos, Gema R. Neira, and Teresa Fernández-Valdés, 2017–20).
Lethal Weapon (Richard Donner, 1987).
Lethal Weapon 2 (Richard Donner, 1989).
Lethal Weapon 3 (Richard Donner, 1992).
Lethal Weapon 4 (Richard Donner, 1998).
Lindenstraße [Linden Street] (Hans W. Geißendörfer, 1985–2020).
Little House on the Prairie (Blanche Hanalis, 1974–83).
Livvagterne [The Protectors] (Mai Brostrøm and Peter Thorsboe, 2009–10).
Lola rennt [Run, Lola, Run] (Tom Tykwer, 1998).
Love, Victor (Isaac Aptaker and Elizabeth Berger, 2020–).
Luise Millerin (Carl Froelich, 1922).
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